

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
CENTENARY
MEMORIAL VOLUME



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA CENTENARY

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Swami Vivekananda as a Delegate to the Parliament of Religions

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Editor

R. C. MAJUMDAR, M.A., Ph.D., F.R.A.S.



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA CENTENARY
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FOREWORD

The city of Calcutta has produced many men of genius in education, science, literature and spiritual endeavour and one of the greatest of them all is Swāmi Vivekānanda. He embodied the spirit of this country. He was a symbol of her spiritual aspirations and fulfilment. It is that spirit which was expressed in the songs of our devotees, the philosophies of our seers, the prayers of our common people. He gave articulation and voice to that eternal spirit of India.

Reality is something to be felt, to be realized, to be experienced. That is the lesson of India. India never counted on dogmas, doctrines etc. They were instruments, they were means for the purpose of realizing the highest truth.

When once you recognize that the Reality is something to be felt, something to be experienced, you do not attach so much importance to the ways by which you attain it. They become subordinate. They become instrumental. And in that great utterance of his in September, 1893, in the Chicago Parliament of Religions, what he said was there is a God above all gods, there is a religion above all religions, there is something which supersedes all our religiosities, all our pieties, rituals, dogmas, doctrines, etc. and that is the religion on the basis of which the whole world, East and West, could be united.

As in the life of the Buddha, there was in the life of Swāmi Vivekānanda a moment when he thought that he should lose himself in the delights of inner life, in the delights of contemplation, and not get back into the world. But Rāmakṛṣṇa told him: 'Shame on you! Why are you trying so much to seek your own personal salvation? *Śivam-ātmani paśyanti na pratimāsu*', the Supreme is in every human being. All human beings are to be regarded as embodiments of the Supreme.' We should realize that the name given to him, Narendra Nāth, was not a mere accident. He was the embodiment of *nara*, of the human being. *Nārāyaṇam naraśakhaṁ śaraṇam prapadye*. *Naraśakhā* is Nārāyaṇa. He felt the pangs of all human beings, and he wanted that every human being should live, should live a decent life. Most

of us exist, but do not live. He wanted every one of us to acquire strength, beauty, power, dignity and be a truly human being. We are not that. He looked at the misery of our country. He looked at the millions who died of poverty and hunger, and he said: I am the worshipper of *Daridra-Nārāyaṇa*, of the *Nārāyaṇa* who is located in all the poor people of this world. So long as they are there, how can I content myself with my own salvation or with my own beatitude? It is my duty to look after them all. The best way to reach God is by the service of man.

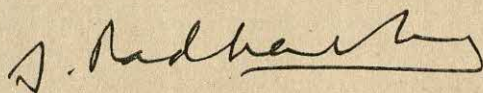
He inculcated a religion of patriotism—not patriotism in the narrow sense of the word, but patriotism as the religion of humanity. His was a religion which called upon us to look upon all human beings as kindred, as belonging to one family. That is the kind of religion which he taught us and which he adopted. He said, “it is a man-making religion”. It is a humanistic religion. There is no divorce between contemplative life and social service. The two things are expressions of one and the same kind of phenomenon. If we have reached the Supreme and felt the reality of God in our own minds and thoughts it would be our duty to come to the rescue of all people who are suffering in this world.

We are today at a critical period not merely in the history of our country but in the history of the world. There are many people who think we are on the edge of an abyss. There is distortion of values, there is lowering of standards, there is wide-spread escapism, a good deal of mass hysteria, and people think of it and collapse in despair, frustration, hopelessness. These are the only things which are open to us. Such a kind of lack of faith in the spirit of man is a treason to the dignity of man. It is an insult to human nature. It is human nature that has brought about all the great changes that have taken place in this world. And if there is any call which Vivekānanda made to us, it is to rely on our own spiritual resources. Say that man has inexhaustible spiritual resources. His spirit is supreme, man is unique. There is nothing inevitable in this world, and we can ward off the worst dangers and worst disabilities by which we are faced. Only we should not lose hope. He gave us fortitude in suffering, he gave us hope in distress, he gave us courage in despair. He told us: ‘Do not be led away by the appearances. Deep down there is a providential will,

there is a purpose in this universe. You must try to co-operate with that purpose and try to achieve it.' Renunciation, courage, service, discipline—these are the mottoes which we can learn from his life.

It is essential, therefore, that we should remember what this great soul stood for, what he taught us. It is not merely a question of remembering it but trying to understand what he wished us to do. We should assimilate his teachings, incorporate them in our being, and make us worthy to be citizens of the country which produced Vivekānanda.

This volume which deals with the various aspects of his life and teaching, and to which I have great pleasure in writing this Foreword, will, I hope, go a great way to achieve these ends.



(S. Radhakrishnan)

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C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

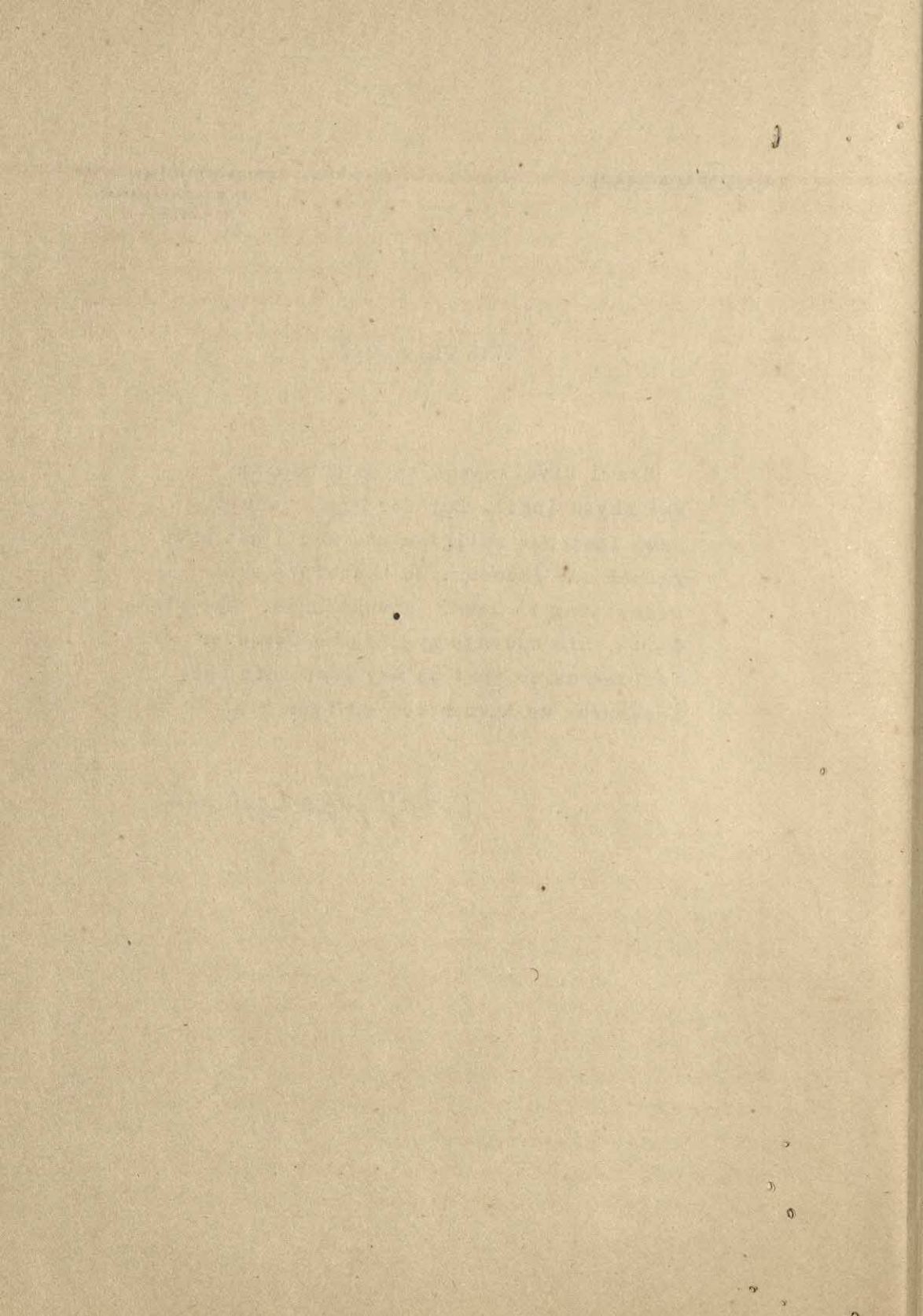
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27th July 1962

Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism
and saved India. But for him we would
have lost our religion and would not have
gained our freedom. We therefore owe
everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his
faith, his courage and his wisdom ever
inspire us so that we may keep safe the
treasures we have received from him!

C. Rajagopalachari



PREFACE

On 9 July, 1961, the citizens of Calcutta, assembled in a public meeting, decided to organize the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Swami Vivekananda of revered memory in a befitting manner. The scheme of celebrations adopted by the Executive Committee included, among other things, the publication of the following:

- (i) A Memorial Volume on Swami Vivekananda's contribution to world-thought with an introductory chapter on India's influence on the thought and culture of the world through the ages.
- (ii) The Complete Works of Swamiji in as many Indian and foreign languages as possible.
- (iii) A representative selection of Swamiji's lectures and writings in as many Indian and foreign languages as possible.
- (iv) A short life of Swamiji with some of his select teachings in as many languages as possible.
- (v) Graded literature on Swamiji's life and teachings suited to different educational levels of the reading public.
- (vi) A book of songs sung by Swami Vivekananda with musical notations.
- (vii) An Album.

The task of giving effect to the scheme was entrusted to a Sub-Committee.

This volume represents the first item of the Publication scheme referred to above. The Publication Sub-Committee is responsible for its general planning, including the selection of topics and contributors, arrangements for printing, collection of illustrations and all other matters incidental thereto. The Sub-Committee delegated to me the onerous duty of editing the Volume and I take this opportunity to place on record my grateful thanks to the other members for the help and advice I have received from them at every stage of its preparation.

It is my most pleasant duty to express, on behalf of the Sub-Committee and on my own behalf, our most hearty and grateful thanks to those who

have kindly contributed to this Volume in order to make the publication worthy of the occasion. Our special thanks are due to Swami Nikhilananda for having secured for publication in this Volume an unpublished lecture of Swami Vivekananda which appears at the beginning of this Volume.

As Swamiji's chief mission in life—to carry India's message of spirituality to the rest of the world—was in reality a revival, after more than a thousand years, of the missionary spirit of Indian culture which formed one of its most distinctive characteristics in the past, it was deemed proper to add at the beginning a short sketch of this little known aspect of Indian culture as the background for a proper appreciation of Swamiji's place in the history of Indian culture from a broad point of view. This introductory chapter has been followed by a sketch of Swamiji's life, a general knowledge of which is necessary to correlate the different points of view from which Swamiji has been studied in the various articles which fill the rest of the Volume.

An attempt has been made to select the topics for these articles in such a manner as would give insight into the different aspects of the life, thought and teachings of Swamiji. But his versatile genius and wonderfully complex personality displayed itself in so many different regions of culture, emotion and intellect, and touched both individual and social life at so many angles, that it is wellnigh impossible to do even bare justice to them all in a single Volume of this kind. Nevertheless, the attempt was worth making, and it may be hoped that in spite of errors and imperfections this Volume will serve the purpose of giving the readers a general view of the great and distinguished personality who even today strides like a Colossus across the whole region of modern Indian history and culture.

Although diacritical marks have not been used in the text to indicate the proper pronunciation of oriental words, the passages written in English characters have also been reproduced in Devanagari alphabet, and all the oriental words used in the text have been alphabetically arranged in a glossary together with the Sanskrit form written in Devanagari and brief notes on their significance. A bibliography of published writings of Swamiji and on Swamiji has been added at the end. In view of the extensive literature on the subject it is hardly necessary to add that the bibliography

is only selective and far from being a complete collection ; it is only intended to facilitate further advanced study on Swamiji.

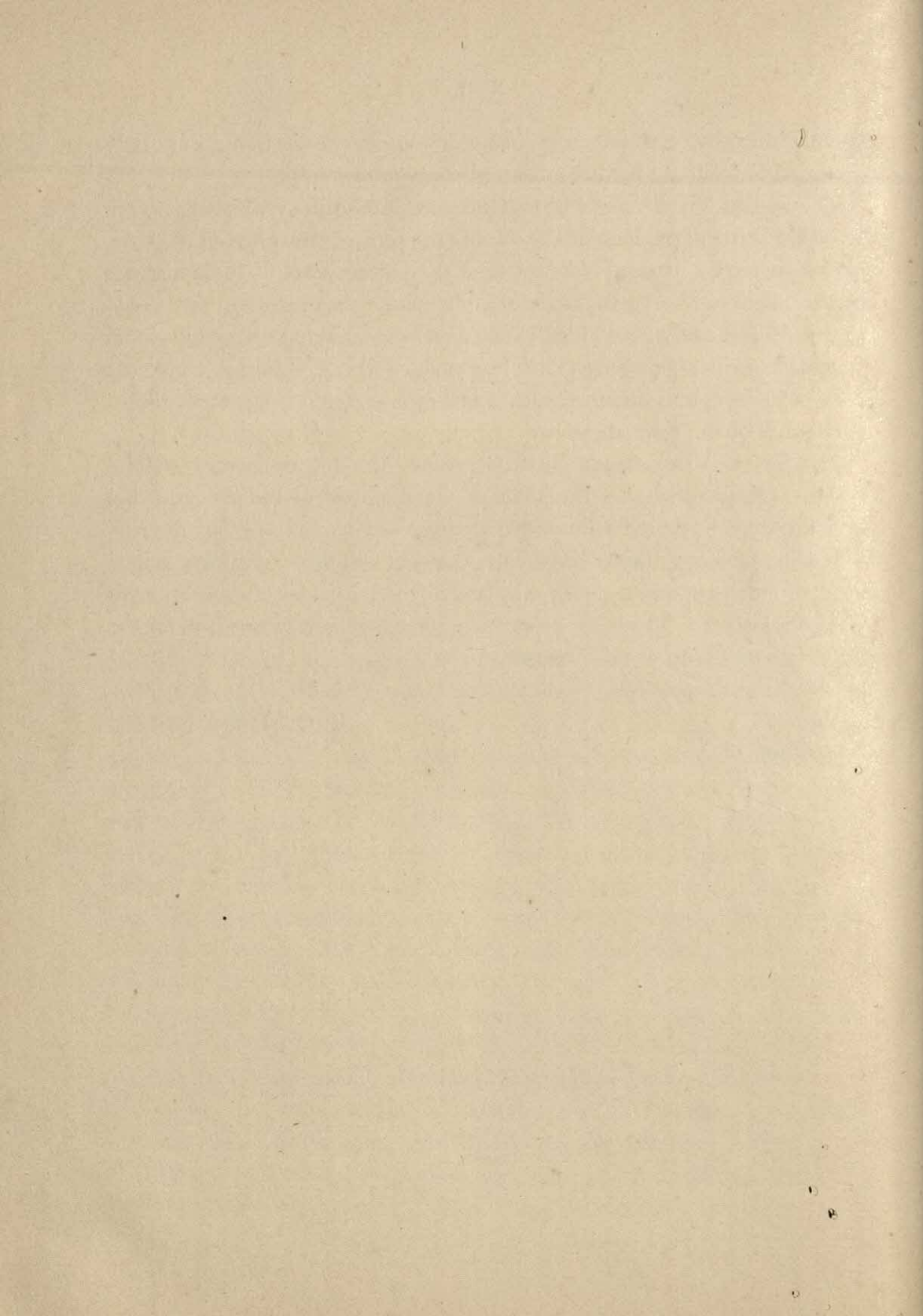
The Swami Vivekananda Birth Centenary Committee, which has sponsored the series of publications, including the present one, referred to above, places on record its deep obligations to the Government of India and the Government of West Bengal for the financial assistance they have made to this project under the Third Five-Year-Plan—Development of Regional Language. Their generous grant has enabled the Committee to fix the prices of these publications at such a low rate as would bring them within easy reach of the general public.

The Swami Vivekananda Birth Centenary Committee is very grateful to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, President of the Republic of India, for having very kindly contributed a Foreword to this Volume.

It is my pleasant duty to convey my thanks to all those who have helped us in various ways and mention may be made in particular of Prof. Sri Srish Chandra Das, M.A. Thanks are also due to Sree Saraswatya Press Ltd. for the printing and get-up of this Volume.

Calcutta
September, 1963

R. C. MAJUMDAR

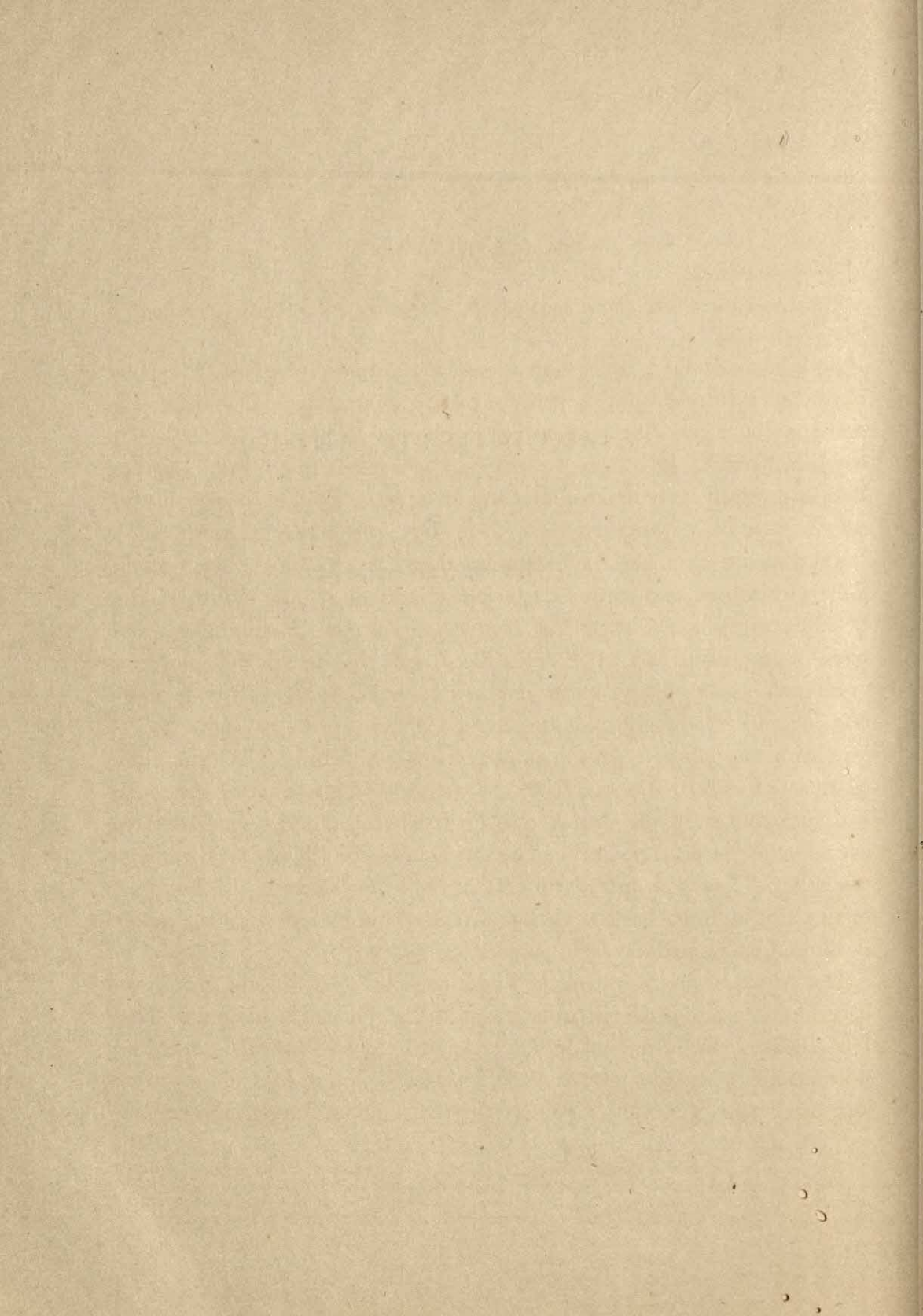


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BUDDHISTIC INDIA

By

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



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BUDDHISTIC INDIA

by Swami Vivekananda*

(Shakespeare Club, Pasadena, California, 8 P.M., February 2, 1900)

Buddhistic India is our subject tonight. Almost all of you, perhaps, have read Edwin Arnold's poem on the life of Buddha, and some of you, perhaps, have gone into the subject with more scholarly interest, as in English, French, and German there is quite a lot of Buddhistic literature. Buddhism itself is the most interesting of subjects, for it is the first historical outburst of a world religion. There have been great religions before Buddhism arose, in India and elsewhere, but, more or less, they are confined within their own races. The ancient Hindus or ancient Jews or ancient Persians, every one of them had a great religion, but these religions were more or less racial. With Buddhism first begins that peculiar phenomenon of religion boldly starting out to conquer the world. Apart from its doctrines and the truths it taught and the message it had to give, we stand face to face with one of the tremendous cataclysms of the world. Within a few centuries of its birth, the barefooted, shaven-headed missionaries of Buddha had spread over all the then known civilized world, and they penetrated even further—from Lapland on the one side to the Philippine Islands on the other. They had spread widely within a few centuries of Buddha's birth; and in India itself the religion of Buddha had at one time nearly swallowed up two-thirds of the population.

The whole of India was never Buddhistic. It stood outside. Buddhism had the same fate as Christianity had with the Jews: the majority of the Jews stood aloof. So the old Indian religion lived on. But the comparison stops here. Christianity, though it could not get within its fold all the Jewish race, itself took the country. Where the old religion existed—the religion

* We are indebted to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York for being enabled to present to our readers this lecture of Swamiji's which is not included in the *Complete Works* and to the best of our knowledge has never before been published. It is presented here with a minimum of editing. Substitutions and conjectural additions are enclosed in square brackets.

of the Jews—that was conquered by Christianity in a very short time and the old religion was dispersed, and so the religion of the Jews lives a sporadic life in different parts of the world. But in India this gigantic child was absorbed, in the long run, by the mother that gave it birth, and today the very name of Buddha is almost unknown all over India. *You* know more about Buddhism than ninety-nine per cent. of the Indians. At best, they of India only know the name—"Oh, he was a great prophet, a great Incarnation of God"—and there it ends. The island of Ceylon remains to Buddha, and in some parts of the Himalayan country there are some Buddhists yet. Beyond that there are none. But [Buddhism] has spread over all the rest of Asia.

Still, it has the largest number of followers of any religion, and it has indirectly modified the teachings of all the other religions. A good deal of Buddhism entered into Asia Minor. It was a constant fight at one time whether the Buddhists would prevail or the later sects of Christians. The [Gnostics] and the other sects of early Christians were more or less Buddhistic in their tendencies, and all these got fused up in that wonderful city of Alexandria, and out of the fusion under Roman law came Christianity. Buddhism in its political and social aspect is even more interesting than its [doctrines] and dogmas ; and as the first outburst of the tremendous world-conquering power of religion, it is very interesting also.

I am mostly interested in this lecture in India as it has been affected by Buddhism ; and to understand Buddhism and its rise a bit, we have to get a few ideas about India as it existed when this great prophet was born.

There was already in India a vast religion with an organized scripture—the Vedas ; and these Vedas existed as a mass of literature and not a book—just as you find the Old Testament, the Bible. Now, the Bible is a mass of literature of different ages ; different persons are the writers, and so on. It is a collection. Now, the Vedas are a vast collection. I don't know whether, if the texts were all found—nobody has found all the texts, nobody even in India has seen all the books—if all the books were known, this room would contain them. It is a huge mass of literature, carried down from generation to generation from God, who gave the scriptures. And the idea about the scriptures in India became tremendously orthodox. You

complain of your orthodoxies in book-worship. If you get the Hindus' idea, where will you be? The Hindus think the Vedas are the direct knowledge of God, that God has created the whole universe in and through the Vedas, and that the whole universe exists because it is in the Vedas. The cow exists outside because the word "cow" is in the Vedas; man exists outside because of the word in the Vedas. Here you see the beginning of that theory which later on Christians developed and expressed in the text: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God." It is the old, ancient theory of India. Upon that is based the whole idea of the scriptures. And mind, every word is the power of God. The word is only the external manifestation on the material plane. So all this manifestation is just the manifestation on the material plane; and the Word is the Vedas, and Sanskrit is the language of God. God spoke once. He spoke in Sanskrit, and that is the divine language. Every other language they consider is no more than the braying of animals; and to denote that they call every other nation that does not speak Sanskrit [mlechhas], the same word as the barbarians of the Greeks. They are braying, not talking, and Sanskrit is the divine language.

Now, the Vedas were not written by anybody; they were eternally co-existent with God. God is infinite. So is knowledge, and through this knowledge is created the world. Their idea of ethics is [that a thing is good] because the law says so. Everything is bounded by that book—nothing [can go] beyond that, because the knowledge of God—you cannot get beyond that. That is Indian orthodoxy.

In the latter part of the Vedas you see the highest, the spiritual. In the early portions there is the crude part. You quote a passage from the Vedas—"That is not good," you say. "Why?" "There is a positive evil injunction"—the same as you see in the Old Testament. There are numbers of things in all old books, curious ideas, which we would not like in our present day. You say, "This doctrine is not at all good; why, it shocks my ethics!" How did you get your idea? [Merely] by your own thought? Get out! If it is ordained by God, what right have you to question? When the Vedas say, "Do not do this; this is immoral," and so on, no more have you the right to question at all. And that is the difficulty. If you tell a

Hindu, "But our Bible does not say so"—"Oh, your Bible! it is a babe of history. What other Bible could there be except the Vedas? What other book could there be? All knowledge is in God. Do you mean to say that He teaches by two or more Bibles? His knowledge came out in the Vedas. Do you mean to say that he committed a mistake, then? Afterwards, he wanted to do something better and taught another Bible to another nation? You cannot bring another book that is as old as Vedas. Everything else—it was all copied after that." They would not listen to you. And the Christian brings the Bible. They say: "That is fraud. God only speaks once, because He never makes mistakes."

Now, just think of that. That orthodoxy is terrible. And if you ask a Hindu that he is to reform his society and do this and that, he says: "Is it in the books? If it is not, I don't care to change. You wait. In five [hundred] years more you will find this is good." If you say to him, "This social institution that you have is not right," he says, "How do you know that." Then he says: "Our social institutions in this matter are the better. Wait five [hundred] years and your institutions will die. The test is the survival of the fittest. You live, but there is not one community in the world which lives five hundred years together. Look here! We have been standing all the time." That is what they would say. Terrible orthodoxy! And thank God I have crossed that ocean.

This was the orthodoxy of India. What else was there? Everything was divided, the whole society, as it is today, though in a much more rigorous form then—divided into castes. There is another thing to learn. There is a tendency to make castes just [now] going on here in the West. And I myself—I am a renegade. I have broken everything. I do not believe in caste, individually. It has very good things in it. For myself, Lord help me! I would not have any caste, if He helps me. You understand what I mean by caste, and you are all trying to make it very fast. It is a hereditary trade [for] the Hindu. The Hindu said in olden times that life must be made easier and smoother. And what makes everything alive? Competition. Hereditary trade kills. You are a carpenter? Very good, your son can be only a carpenter. What are you? A blacksmith? Blacksmithing becomes a caste; your children will become blacksmiths. We

don't allow anybody else to come into that trade, so you will be quiet and remain there. You are a military man, a fighter? Make a caste. You are a priest? Make a caste. The priesthood is hereditary. And so on. Rigid, high power! That has a great side, and that side is [that] it really rejects competition. It is that which has made the nation live while other nations have died—that caste. But there is a great evil: it checks individuality. I will have to be a carpenter because I am born a carpenter; but I do not like it. That is in the books, and that was before Buddha was born. I am talking to you of India as it was before Buddha. And you are trying today what you call socialism! Good things will come; but in the long run you will be a [blight] upon the race. Freedom is the watchword. Be free! A free body, a free mind, and a free soul! That is what I have felt all my life: I would rather be doing evil freely than be doing good under bondage. (*Applause here and, of course, elsewhere.*)

Well, these things that they are crying for now in the West, they have done ages before, there. Land has been nationalized . . . by thousands all these things. There is blame upon this hide-bound caste. The Indian people are intensely socialistic. But, beyond that, there is a wealth of individualism. They are as tremendously individualistic—that is to say, after laying down all these minute regulations. They have regulated how you should eat, drink, sleep, die! Everything is regulated there; from early morning to when you go to bed and sleep, you are following regulations and law. Law, law, law. Do you wonder that a nation should [live] under that? Law is dead. The more of the law in a country, the worse for the country. [But to be an individual] we go to the mountains, where there is no law, no government. The more of law you make, the more of police and socialism, the more of blackguards there are. Now this tremendous regulation of law [is] there. As soon as a child is born, he knows that he is born a slave: slave to his caste, first; slave to his nation, next. Slave, slave, slave. Every action—his drinking and his eating. He must eat under a regular method: this prayer with the first morsel, this prayer with the second, that prayer with the third, and that prayer when he drinks water. Just think of that! Thus from day to day it goes on and on.

But they were thinkers. They knew that this would not lead to real

greatness. So they left a way out for them all. After all, they found out that all these regulations are only for the world and the life of the world. As soon as you don't want money [and] you don't want children—no business for this world—you can go out entirely free. Those that go out thus were called sannyāsins—people who have given up. They never organized themselves, nor do they now ; they are a free order of men and women who refuse to marry, who refuse to possess property, and they have no law—not even the Vedas bind them. They stand on top of the Vedas. They are [at] the other pole [from] our social institutions. They are beyond caste. They have grown beyond. They are too big to be bound by these little regulations and things. Only two things [are] necessary for them : they must not possess property and must not marry. If you marry, settle down, or possess property, immediately the regulations will be upon you ; but if you don't do either of these two, you are free. They were the living gods of the race, and ninety-nine per cent. of our great men and women were to be found among them.

In every country, real greatness of the soul means extraordinary individuality, and that individuality you cannot get in society. It frets and fumes and wants to burst society. If society wants to keep it down, that soul wants to burst society into pieces. And they made an easy channel. They say : "Well, once you get out of society, then you may preach and teach everything that you like. We only worship you from a distance. So there were the tremendous, individualistic men and women, and they are the highest persons in all society. If one of those yellow-clad shaven-heads comes, the prince, even, dare not remain seated in his presence ; he must stand. The next half hour, one of these sannyāsins might be at the door of one of the cottages of the poorest subjects, glad to get only a piece of bread. And he has to mix with all grades ; now he sleeps with a poor man in his cottage ; tomorrow [he] sleeps on the beautiful bed of a king. One day he dines on gold plates in kings' palaces ; the next day, he has not any food and sleeps under a tree. Society looks upon these men with great respect ; and some of them, just to show their individuality, will try to shock the public ideas. But the people are never shocked so long as they keep to these principles : perfect purity and no property.

These men, being very individualistic, they are always trying new theories and plans—visiting in every country. They must think something new: they cannot run in the old groove. Others are all trying to make us run in the old groove, forcing us all to think alike. But human nature is greater than any human foolishness. Our greatness is greater than our weakness; the good things are stronger than the evil things. Supposing they succeeded in making us all think in the same groove: there we would be—no more thought to think; we would die.

Here was a society which had almost no vitality, its members pressed down by iron chains of law. They were forced to help each other. There one was under regulations [that were] tremendous: regulations even how to breathe; how to wash face and hands; how to bathe; how to brush the teeth; and so on, to the moment of death. And beyond these regulations was the wonderful individualism of the *sannyāsin*. There he was. And every day a new sect was rising amongst these strong, individualistic men and women. The ancient Sanskrit books tell about their standing out—of one woman who was a very quaint, queer old woman of the ancient times: she always had some new thing; sometimes [she was] criticized, but always people were afraid of her, obeying her quietly. So, there were those great men and women of olden times.

And within this society, so oppressed by regulations, the power was in the hands of the priests. In the social scale, the highest caste is [that of] the priest, and that being a business—I do not know any other word, that is why I use the word “priest”. It is not in the same sense as in this country, because our priest is not a man that teaches religion or philosophy. The business of a priest is to perform all these minute details of regulations which have been laid down. The priest is the man who helps in these regulations. He marries you; to your funeral he comes to pray. So at all the ceremonies performed upon a man or a woman the priest must be there. In society the ideal is marriage. [Everyone] must marry. It is the rule. Without marriage, man is not able to perform any religious ceremony; he is only half a man; [he] is not competent to officiate—even the priest himself cannot officiate as a priest, except he marries. Half a man is unfit within society.

Now, the power of the priests increased tremendously.... The general policy of our national law-givers was to give the priests this honour. They also had the same socialistic plan [you are] just ready to [try] that checked them from getting money. What [was] the motive? Social honour. Mind you, the priest in all countries is the highest in the social scale, so much so in India that the poorest brahmin is greater than the greatest king in the country, by birth. He is the nobleman in India. But the law does not allow him ever to become rich. The law grinds him down to poverty—only, it gives him this honour. He cannot do a thousand things; and the higher is the caste in the social scale, the more restricted are its enjoyments. The higher the caste, the less the number of kinds of food that man can eat, the less the amount of food that man may eat, the less the number of occupations [he may] engage in. To you, his life would be only a perpetual train of hardships—nothing more than that. It is a perpetual discipline in eating, drinking, and everything; and all [penalties] which are required from the lower caste are required from the higher ten times more. The lowest man tells a lie; his fine is one dollar. A brahmin, he must pay, say a hundred dollars—[for] he knows better.

But this was a grand organization to start with. Later on, the time came when these priests, they began to get all the power in their hands; and at last they forgot the secret of their power: poverty. They were men whom society fed and clad so that they might simply learn and teach and think. Instead of that, they began to spread out their hands to clutch at the riches of society. They became “money-grabbers”—to use your word—and forgot all these things.

Then there was the second caste, the kingly caste, the military. Actual power was in their hands. Not only so—they have produced all of our great thinkers, and not the brahmins. It is curious. All our great prophets, almost without one exception, belong to the kingly caste. The great man Krishna was also of that caste; Rāma, he also, and all our great philosophers, almost all [sat] on the throne; thence came all the great philosophers of renunciation. From the throne came the voice that always cried, “Renounce”. These military people were their kings; and they [also] were the philosophers; they were the speakers in the Upanishads. In their

brahmins and their thought they were greater than the priests, they were more powerful, they were the kings—and yet the priests got all the power and tried to tyrannize over them. And so that was going on: political competition between the two castes, the priests and the kings.

Another phenomenon is there. Those of you that have been to hear the first lecture already know that in India there are two great races: one is called the Aryan; the other, the non-Aryan. It is the Aryan race that has the three castes; but the whole of the rest are dubbed with one name—"sudras"—no caste. They are not Aryans at all. (Many people came from outside of India, and they found the sudras [there], the aborigines of the country.) However it may be, these vast masses of non-Aryan people and the mixed people among them, they gradually became civilized and they began to scheme for the same rights as the Aryans. They wanted to enter their schools and their colleges; they wanted to take the sacred thread of the Aryans; they wanted to perform the same ceremonies as the Aryans, and wanted to have equal rights in religion and politics like the Aryans. And the brahmin priest, he was the great antagonist of such claims. You see, it is the nature of priests in every country—they are the most conservative people, naturally. So long as it is a trade, it must be; it is to their interest to be conservative. So this tide of murmur outside the Aryan pale, the priests were trying to check with all their might. Within the Aryan pale there was also a tremendous religious ferment, and [it was] mostly led by this military caste.

There was already the sect of Jains [who are a] conservative [force] in India [even] today. It is a very ancient sect. They declared against the validity of the scriptures of the Hindus, the Vedas. They wrote some books themselves, and they said, "Our books are the only original books, the only original Vedas, and the Vedas that now are going on under that name have been written by the brahmins to dupe the people." And they also laid the same plan. You see, it is difficult for you to meet the arguments of the Hindus about the scriptures. They, also, claimed the world has been created through those books. And they were written in the popular language. The Sanskrit, even then, had ceased to be a spoken language—[it had] just the same relation [to the spoken language] as

Latin has to modern Italian. Now, they wrote all their books in Pāli,¹ and when a brahmin said, "Why, your books are in Pāli!" they said, "Sanskrit is a language of the dead."

In their methods and manners they were different. For, you see, these Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, are a vast mass of accumulation—some of them crude—until you come to where religion is taught, only the spiritual. Now, that was the portion of the Vedas which these sects all claimed to preach. Then there are three steps in the ancient Vedas: first, work; second, worship; third, knowledge. When a man purifies himself by work and worship then God is within that man. He has realized He is already there. He only can have seen Him because the mind has become pure. Now, the mind can become purified by work and worship. That is all. Salvation is already there. We don't know it. Therefore, work, worship, and knowledge are the three steps. By work, they mean doing good to others. That has, of course, something in it, but mostly, as to the brahmins, work means to perform these elaborate ceremonials: killing of cows and killing of bulls, killing of goats and all sorts of animals, that are fresh taken and thrown into the fire, and so on. "Now," declared the Jains, "that is no work at all, because, injuring others can never be any good work;" and they said: "This is the proof that your Vedas are false Vedas, manufactured by the priests, because you do not mean to say that any good book will order us [to be] killing animals and doing these things. You do not believe it. So all this killing of animals and other things that you see in the Vedas, they have been written by the brahmins, because they alone are benefited. It is the priest only [who] pockets the money and goes home. So, therefore, it is all priestcraft."

It was one of their doctrines that there cannot be any God: "The priests have invented God, that the people may believe in God and pay them money. All nonsense! there is no God. There is nature and there are souls, and that is all. Souls have got entangled into this life and got round them the clothing of man you call a body. Now, do good work." But from that naturally came the doctrine that everything that is matter is vile. They are the first teachers of asceticism. If the body is the result of impurity, why, therefore the body is vile. If a man stands on one leg

for some time—"All right, it is a punishment." If the head comes up bump against a wall—"Rejoice, it is a very good punishment." Some of the great founders of the [Franciscan Order]—one of them St. Francis—were going to a certain place to meet somebody ; and St. Francis had one of his companions with him, and he began to talk as to whether [the person] would receive them or not, and this man suggested that possibly he would reject them. Said St. Francis: "That is not enough, brother. But if, when we go and knock at the door the man comes and drives us away, that is not enough. But if he orders us to be bound and gives us a thorough whipping, even that is not enough. And then, if he binds us hands and feet and whips us until we bleed at every pore and throws us outside in the snow, that would be enough."

These [same] ascetic ideas prevailed at that time. These Jains were the first great ascetics ; but they did some great work. "Don't injure any and do good to all that you can, and that is all the morality and ethics, and that is all the work there is, and the rest is all nonsense—the brahmins created that. Throw it all away." And then they went to work and elaborated this one principle all through, and it is a most wonderful ideal: how all that we call ethics they simply bring out from that one great principle of non-injury and doing good.

This sect was at least five hundred years before Buddha, and he was five hundred and fifty years before Christ.¹ Now the whole of the animal creation they divide into five sections: the lowest have only one organ, that of touch ; the next one, touch and taste ; the next, touch, taste, and hearing ; the next, touch, taste, hearing, and sight. And the next, the five organs. The first two, the one-organ and the two-organ, are invisible to the naked eye, and they are everywhere in water. A terrible thing, killing these [low forms of life]. This bacteriology has come into existence in the modern world only in the last twenty years and theretofore nobody knew anything about it. They said, the lowest animals are only one-organ, touch ; nothing else. The next greater [were] also invisible. And they all knew that if you boiled water these animals were all killed. So these monks, if they died of thirst, they would never kill these animals by drinking water. But if [a monk] stands at your door and you give him a little boiled

water, the sin is on you of killing the animals—and he will get the benefit. They carry these ideas to ludicrous extremes. For instance, in rubbing the body—if he bathes—he will have to kill numbers of animalcules ; so he never bathes. He gets killed himself: he says, that is all right. Life has no care for him ; he will get killed and save life.

These Jains were there. There were various other sects of ascetics ; and while this was going on, on the one hand, there was the political jealousy between the priests and the kings. And then these different dissatisfied sects [were] springing up everywhere. And there was the greater problem : the vast multitudes of people wanting the same rights as the Aryans, dying of thirst while the perennial stream of nature went flowing by them, and no right to drink a drop of water.

And that man was born—the great man Buddha. Most of you know about him, his life. And in spite of all the miracles and stories that generally get fastened upon any great man, in the first place, he is one of the most historical prophets of the world. Two are very historical: one, the most ancient, Buddha, and the other, Mohammed—because both friends and foes are agreed about them. So we are perfectly sure that there were such persons. As for the other persons, we have only to take for granted what the disciples say—nothing more. Our Krishna—you know, the Hindu prophet—he is very mythological. A good deal of his life, and everything about him, is written only by his disciples ; and then there seem to be, sometimes, three or four men, who all loom into one. We do not know so clearly about many of the prophets ; but as to this man, because both friends and foes write of him, we are sure that there was such an historical personage. And if we analyse through all the fables and reports of miracles and stories that generally are heaped upon a great man in this world, we will find an inside core ; and all through the account of that man, he never did a thing for himself—never! How do you know that? Because, you see, when fables are fastened upon a man, the fables must be tinged with that man's general character. Not one fable tried to impute any vice or any immorality to the man. Even his enemies have favourable accounts.

When Buddha was born, he was so pure that whosoever looked at his

face from a distance immediately gave up the ceremonial religion and became a monk and became saved. So the gods held a meeting. They said, "We are undone." Because most of the gods live upon the ceremonies. These sacrifices go to the gods and these sacrifices were all gone. The gods were dying of hunger and [the reason for] it was that their power was gone. So the gods said, "We must, anyhow, put this man down. He is too pure for our life." And then the gods came and said: "Sir, we come to ask you something. We want to make a great sacrifice and we mean to make a huge fire, and we have been seeking all over the world for a pure spot to light the fire on and could not find it, and now we have found it. If you will lie down, on your breast we will make the huge fire." "Granted," he says, "go on." And the gods built the fire high upon the breast of Buddha, and they thought he was dead, and he was not. And then they went about and said, "We are undone." And all the gods began to strike him. No good. They couldn't kill him. From underneath the voice comes: "Why [are you] making all these vain attempts?" "Whoever looks upon you becomes purified and is saved, and nobody is going to worship us." "Then your attempt is vain, because purity can never be killed." This fable was written by his enemies, and yet throughout the fable the only blame that attaches to Buddha is that he was so great a teacher of purity.

• About his doctrines some of you know a little. It is his doctrines that appeal to many modern thinkers whom you call agnostics. He was a great preacher of the brotherhood of mankind: "Aryan or non-Aryan, caste or no caste, and sects or no sects, everyone has the same right to God and to religion and to freedom. Come in all of you." But as to other things, he was very agnostic. "Be practical." There came to him one day five young men, brahmin born, quarrelling upon a question. They came to him to ask him the way to truth. And one said, "My people teach this, and this is the way to truth." The other said, "I have been taught this, and this is the only way to truth." "Which is the right way, sir?" "Well, you say your people taught this is truth and this is the way to God?" "Yes." "But did you see God?" "No, sir." "Your father?" "No, sir." "Your grandfather?" "No, sir." "None of them saw God?" "No." "Well, and your teachers—neither [any] of them saw God?" "No." And he asked the same

to the others. They all declared that none had seen God. "Well," said Buddha, "in a certain village came a young man weeping and howling and crying: 'Oh, I love her so! oh my, I love her so!' And then the villagers came; and the only thing he said was he loved her so! 'Who is she that you love?' 'I don't know.' 'Where does she live?' 'I don't know'—but he loved her so. 'How does she look?' 'That I don't know; but oh, I love her so.'" Then asked Buddha, "Young man, what would you call this young man?" "Why sir, he was a fool!" And they all declared, "Why, sir, that young man was certainly a fool, to be crying and all that about a woman, to say he loved her so much and he never saw her or knew that she existed or anything!" "Are you not the same? You say that this God your father or your grandfather never saw, and now you are quarrelling upon a thing which neither you nor your ancestors ever knew, and you are trying to cut each others' throats about it." Then the young men asked: "What are we to do?" "Now, tell me: did your father ever teach that God is ever angry?" "No, sir." "Did your father ever teach that God is evil?" "No, sir; He is always pure." "Well, now, if you are pure and good and all that, don't you think that you will have more chance to come near to that God than by discussing all this and trying to cut each others' throats? Therefore, say I: be pure and be good; be pure and love everyone." And that was [all].

You see that non-killing of animals and charity towards animals was an already existing doctrine when he was born; but it was new with him—the breaking down of caste, that tremendous movement. And the other thing that was new: he took forty of his disciples and sent them all over the world, saying, "Go ye; mix with all races and nations and preach the excellent gospel for the good of all, for the benefit of all." And of course he was not molested by the Hindus. He died at a ripe old age. All his life he was a most stern man: he never yielded to weakness. I don't believe many of his doctrines; of course I don't. I believe that the Vedāntism of the old Hindus is much more thoughtful, is a grander philosophy of life. I like his method of work: but what I like [most], in that man is that, among all the prophets of mankind, here was a man who never had any cobwebs in his brain, and [who was] sane and strong. When

kingdoms were at his feet, he was still the same man, maintaining "I am a man amongst men."

Why, the Hindus, they are dying to worship somebody. You will find, if you live long enough, I will be worshipped by our people. If you go there to teach them something, before you die you will be worshipped. Always trying to worship somebody. And living in that race, the world-honoured Buddha, he died always declaring that he was but man. None of his adulators could draw from him one remark that he was anything different from any other man.

Those last dying words of his always thrilled through my heart. He was old, he was suffering, he was near his death, and then came the despised outcaste—he lives on carrion, dead animals; the Hindus would not allow them to come into cities—one of these invited him to a dinner and he came with his disciples, and the poor Chunda, he wanted to treat this great teacher according to what he thought would be best; so he had a lot of pig's flesh and a lot of rice for him, and Buddha looked at that. The disciples were all [hesitating], and the Master said: "Well, don't eat, you will be hurt." But he quietly sat down and ate. The teacher of equality must eat the [outcaste] Chunda's dinner, even the pig's flesh. He sat down and ate it.

He was already dying. He found death coming on, and he asked, "Spread for me something under this tree, for I think the end is near." And he was there under the tree, and he laid himself down; he could not sit up any more. And the first thing he did, he said: "Go to that Chunda and tell him that he has been one of my greatest benefactors; for his meal, I am going to Nirvāna." And then several men came to be instructed, and a disciple said, "Don't go near now: the Master is passing away." And as soon as he heard it, the Lord said, "Let them come in." And somebody else came and the disciples would not [let them enter]. Again they came, and then the dying Lord said: "And O, thou Ananda, I am passing away. Weep not for me. Think not for me. I am gone. Work out diligently your own salvation. Each one of you is just what I am. I am nothing but one of you. What I am today is what I made myself. Do you struggle and make yourselves what I am...."

These are the memorable words of Buddha: "Believe not because an old book is produced as an authority. Believe not because your fathers said [you should] believe the same. Believe not because other people like you believe it. Test everything, try everything, and then believe it, and if you find it for the good of many, give it to all." And with these words the Master passed away.

See the sanity of the man. No gods, no angels, no demons—nobody. Nothing of the kind. Stern, sane, every brain-cell perfect and complete, even at the moment of death. No delusion. I do not agree with many of his doctrines. You may not. But in my opinion—oh, if I had only one drop of that strength! The sanest philosopher the world ever saw. Its best and its sanest teacher. And never that man bent before even the power of the tyrannical brahmins. Never that man bent. Direct and everywhere the same: weeping with the miserable, helping the miserable, singing with the singing, strong with the strong, and everywhere the same sane and able man.

And, of course, with all this I can [not] understand his doctrine. You know he denied that there was any soul in man—that is, in the Hindu sense of the word. Now, we Hindus all believe that there is something permanent in man, which is unchangeable and which is living through all eternity. And that in man we call Atman, which is without beginning and without end. And [we believe] that there is something permanent in nature, [and that we call Brahman, which is also without beginning and without end]. He denied both of these. He said there is no proof of anything permanent. It is all a mere mass of change; a mass of thought in a continuous change is what you call a mind. . . . The torch is leading the procession. The circle is a delusion. [Or take the example of a river]. It is a continuous river passing on; every moment a fresh mass of water passing on. So is this life: so is all body, so is all mind.

Well, I don't understand his doctrine—we Hindus never understood it. But I can understand the motive behind that. Oh, the gigantic motive. The Master says that selfishness is the great curse of the world; that we are selfish and that therein is the curse. There should be no motive for selfishness. You are [like a river] passing [on]—a continuous phenomenon.

Have no God ; have no soul ; stand on your feet and do good for good's sake—neither for fear of punishment nor for [the sake of] going anywhere. Stand sane and motiveless. The motive is : I want to do good, it is good to do good. Tremendous ! Tremendous ! I do not sympathize with his metaphysics at all ; but my mind is jealous when I think of the moral force. Just ask your minds which one of you can stand for one hour, able and daring like that man. I cannot for five minutes. I would become a coward and want a support. I am weak—a coward. And I warm to think of this tremendous giant. We cannot approach that strength. The world never saw [anything] compared to that strength. And I have not yet seen any other strength like that. We are all born cowards. If we can save ourselves [we care about nothing else]. Inside is the tremendous fear, the tremendous motive, all the time. Our own selfishness makes us the most arrant cowards ; our own selfishness is the great cause of fear and cowardice. And there he stood : “Do good because it is good ; ask no more questions ; that is enough. A man made to do good by a fable, a story, a superstition—he will be doing evil as soon as the opportunity comes. That man alone is good who does good for good's sake, and that is the character of the man.”

“And what remains of man?” was asked of the Master. “Everything—everything. But what is in the man? Not the body, not the soul, but character. And that is left for all ages. All that have passed and died, they have left for us their characters, eternal possessions for the rest of humanity ; and these characters are working—working all through.” What of Buddha? What of Jesus of Nazareth? The world is full of their characters. Tremendous doctrine!

Let us come down a little—we have not come to the subject at all. (*Laughter*) I must add not a few words more this evening. . . .

And then, what he did. His method of work : organization. The idea that you have today of church, is his character. He left the church. He organized these monks and made them into a body. Even the voting by ballot is there five hundred and sixty years before Christ. Minute organization. The church was left and became a tremendous power, and did great missionary work in India and outside India. Then came, three

hundred years after, two hundred years before Christ,² the great emperor Aśoka, as he has been called by your Western historians, the divinest of monarchs, and that man became entirely converted to the ideas of Buddha, and he was the greatest emperor of the world at that time. His grandfather was a contemporary of Alexander, and since Alexander's time India had become more intimately connected with Greece. . . . Every day in Central Asia some inscription or other is being found. India had forgotten all about Buddha and Aśoka and everyone. But there were pillars, obelisks, columns, with ancient letters which nobody could read. Some of the old Moghul emperors declared they would give millions for anybody to read those ; but nobody could.³ Within the last thirty years those have been read ; they are all written in Pāli.

The first inscription is :⁴ “

And then he writes this inscription, describing the terror and the misery of war ; and then he became converted to religion. Then said he : “Henceforth let none of my descendants think of acquiring glory by conquering other races. If they want glory, let them help other races ; let them send teachers of sciences and teachers of religion. A glory won by the sword is no glory at all.” And next you find how he is sending missionaries even to Alexandria. . . . You wonder that you find all over that part of the country sects rising immediately, called Theraputae, Essenes, and all those—extreme vegetarians, and so on. Now this great Emperor Aśoka built hospitals for men and for animals. The inscriptions show they are ordering hospitals, building hospitals for men and for animals. That is to say, when an animal gets old, if I am poor and cannot keep it any longer, I don't shoot it down for mercy. These hospitals are maintained by public charity. The coasting traders pay so much upon every hundred-weight they sell, and all that goes to the hospital ; so nobody is touched. If you have a cow that is old—anything—and don't want to keep it, send it to the hospital ; they keep it, even down to rats and mice and anything you send. Only, our ladies try to kill these animals sometimes, you know. They go in large numbers to see them and they bring all sorts of cakes ; the animals are killed many times by this food. He claimed that the animals should be as much under the protection of the government as man. Why

should animals be allowed to be killed? [There] is no reason. But he says, before prohibiting the killing of animals for food, even, [people] must be provided with all sorts of vegetables. So he sent and collected all kinds of vegetables and planted them in India ; and then, as soon as these were introduced, the order was: henceforth, whosoever kills an animal will be punished.⁵ A government is to be a government, the animals must be protected also. What business has a man to kill a cow, a goat, or any other animal for food?

Thus Buddhism was and did become a great political power in India. Gradually it also fell to pieces—after all this tremendous missionary enterprise. But to their credit it must be said, they never took up the sword to preach religion. Excepting the Buddhistic religion, there is not one religion in the world which could make one step without bloodshed—not one which could get a hundred thousand converts just by brain power alone. No.—no. All through. And this is just what you are going to do in the Philippines. That is your method. Make them religious by the sword. That is what your priests are preaching. Conquer and kill them that they may get religion. A wonderful way of preaching religion!

You know how this great emperor Aśoka was converted. This great emperor in his youth was not so good. [He had a brother.] And the two brothers quarrelled and the other brother defeated this one, and the emperor in vengeance wanted to kill him. The emperor got the news that he had taken shelter with a Buddhistic monk. Now, I have told you how our monks are very holy ; no one would come near them. The emperor himself came. He said, "Deliver the man to me." Then the monk preached to him: "Vengeance is bad. Disarm anger with love. Anger is not cured by anger, nor hatred by hatred. Dissolve anger by love. Cure hatred by love. Friend, if for one evil thou returnest another, thou curest not the first evil, but only add one evil more to the world." The emperor said: "That is all right, fool that you are. Are you ready to give your life—to give your life for that man?" "Ready, sir." And he came out. And the emperor drew his sword, and he said: "Get ready." And just [as he] was going to strike, he looked at the face of the man. There was not a wink in those eyes. The emperor stopped, and he said: "Tell me, monk, where

did you learn this strength, poor beggar, not to wink?" And then he preached again. "Go on, monk," he said. "That is nice," he said. Accordingly, he [fell under] the charm of the Master—Buddha's charm.⁶

There have been three things in Buddhism: the Buddha himself, his law, his church. At first it was so simple. When the Master died, before his death, they said: "What shall we do with you?" "Nothing." "What monuments shall we make over you?" He said, "Just make a little heap if you want, or just don't do anything." By and by there arose huge temples and all the paraphernalia. The use of images was unknown before then. I say they were the first to use images. There are images of Buddha and all the saints, sitting about and praying. All this paraphernalia went on multiplying with this organization. Then these monasteries became rich. The real cause of the downfall is here. Monasticism is all very good for a few; but when you preach it in such a fashion that every man or woman who has a mind immediately gives up social life, when you find over the whole of India monasteries, some containing a hundred thousand monks, sometimes twenty thousand monks in one building—huge, gigantic buildings, these monasteries, scattered all over India and, of course, centres of learning, and all that—who were left to procreate progeny, to continue the race? Only the weaklings. All the strong and vigorous minds went out. And then came national decay by the sheer loss of vigour.

I will tell you of this marvellous brotherhood. It is great. But theory and idea is one thing and actual working is another thing. The idea is very great: practising non-resistance, and all that: but if all of us go out in the street and practise non-resistance, there would be very little left in this city. That is to say, the idea is all right, but nobody has yet found a practical solution [as to] how to attain it.

There is something in caste, so far as it means blood: such a thing as heredity there is, certainly. Now try to [understand]—why don't you mix your blood with the Negroes, the American Indians? Nature won't allow you. Nature does not allow you to mix your blood with them. There is the unconscious working that saves the race. That was the Aryan's caste. Mind you, I don't say that they are not equal to us. They must have the same privileges and advantages, and everything; but we know that if certain

rac^{es} mix up, they become degraded. With all the strict caste of the Aryan and non-Aryan, that wall was thrown down to a certain extent, and hordes of these outlandish races came in with all their queer superstitions and manners and customs. Think of this: not decency enough to wear clothes, eating carrion, etc. But behind him came his fetish, his human sacrifice, his superstition, his diabolism. He kept it behind, [he remained] decent for a few years. After that he brought all [these] things out in front. And that was degrading to the whole race. And then the blood mixed; [intermarriages] took place with all sorts of unmixable races. The race fell down. But in the long run it proved good. If you mix up with Negroes and American Indians, surely this civilization will fall down. But hundreds and hundreds years after, out of this mixture will come a gigantic race once more, stronger than ever; but for the time being you have to suffer. The Hindus believe—that is a peculiar belief, I think; and I don't know, I have nothing to say to the contrary, I have not found anything to the contrary—they believe there was only one civilized race: the Aryan. Until he gives his blood, no other race can be civilized. No teaching will do. The Aryan gives his blood to a race and then it becomes civilized. Teaching alone will not do. He would be an example in your country: would you give your blood to the Negro race? Then he would get higher culture.

The Hindu loves caste. I may have a little taint of that superstition—I don't know. I love the Master's ideal. Great! But for me, I don't think that the working was very practical; and that was one of the great causes that led to the downfall of the Indian nation, in the long run. But then it brought about this tremendous fusion. Where so many different races are, all fusing, mingling—one man white like you, or yellow, while another man as black as I am, and all grades between these two extremes, and each race keeping their customs, manners and everything—in the long run a fusion is taking place, and out of this fusion surely will come a tremendous upheaval; but for the time being the giant must sleep. That is the effect of all such fusion.

When Buddhism went down that way, there came the inevitable reaction. There is but one entity in the whole world. It is a unit world. The diversity is only eye-service. It is all one. The idea of unity and what we

call monism—without duality—is the idea in India. This doctrine has been always in India ; [it was] brought forward whenever materialism and scepticism broke down everything. When Buddhism broke down everything by introducing all sorts of foreign barbarians into India—their manners and customs and things—there was a reaction, and that reaction was led by a young monk [Sankarāchārya]. And [instead] of preaching new doctrines and always thinking new thoughts and making sects, he brought back the Vedas to life ; and modern Hinduism has thus an admixture of ancient Hinduism, over which the Vedāntists predominate. But, you see, what once dies never comes back to life, and those ceremonials of [Hinduism] never came back to life. You will be astonished if I tell you that, according to the old ceremonials, he is not a good Hindu who does not eat beef. On certain occasions he must sacrifice a bull and eat it. That is disgusting now. However they may differ from each other in India, in that they are all one—they never eat beef. The ancient sacrifices and the ancient gods, they are all gone : modern India belongs to the spiritual part of the Vedas.

Buddhism was the first sect in India. They were the first to say : “Ours is the only path. Until you join our church you cannot be saved.” That was what they said : “It is the correct path.” But, being of Hindu blood, they couldn’t be such stony-hearted sectarians as in other countries. There will be salvation for you : nobody will go wrong for ever. No, no. [There was] too much of Hindu blood in them for that. The heart was not so stony as that. But you have to join them.

But the Hindu idea, you know, is not to join anybody. Wherever you are, that is a point from which you can start to the centre. All right. It—Hinduism—has this advantage : its secret is that doctrines and dogmas don’t mean anything ; what you are is what matters. If you talk all the best philosophies the world ever produced, [but] if you are a fool in your behaviour, they do not count ; and if in your behaviour you are good you have more chances. This being so, the Vedāntist can wait for everybody. Vedāntism teaches that there is but one existence and one thing real, and that is God. It is beyond all time and space and causation and everything. We can never define Him. We can never say what He is except [that] He is

Absolute Existence, Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Blissfulness. He is the only reality. Of everything He is the reality: of you and me, of the wall and of [everything] everywhere. It is His knowledge upon which all our knowledge depends; it is His blissfulness upon which depends our pleasure; and He is the only reality. And when man realizes this he knows that, "I am the only reality, because I am He—what is real in me is He also." So that when a man is perfectly pure and good and beyond all grossness, he finds, as Jesus found: "I and my Father are one." The Vedāntist has patience to wait for everybody. Wherever you are, this is the highest: "I and my Father are one." Realize it. If an image helps, images are welcome. If worshipping a great man helps you, worship him. If worshipping Mohammed helps you, go on. Only be sincere; and if you are sincere, says Vedāntism, you are sure to be brought to the goal. None will be left. Your heart, which contains all truth, will unfold itself chapter after chapter, till you know the last truth, that "I and my Father are one." And what is salvation? To live with God. Where? Anywhere. Here this moment. One moment in infinite time is quite as good as any other moment. This is the old doctrine of the Vedas, you see. This was revived. Buddhism died out of India. It left its mark on their charity, its animals, etc., in India; and Vedāntism is reconquering India from one end to the other.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

This lecture of Swamiji is published exactly in the form in which we received it from Swami Nikhilananda of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York, USA, who is presumably responsible for the 'substitutions and conjectural additions' enclosed in square brackets, referred to in the footnote at the bottom of Page I.

It is evident from these that Swamiji had no opportunity to revise the lecture in its printed form. Besides, at the time when this lecture was delivered, more than sixty years ago, our knowledge of ancient Indian history was not as accurate as it is today. These probably account for a few statements in this lecture which are at variance with what is found in modern books on Indian history. Although these few passages do not affect the main subject-matter of the lecture, the Editor feels that the following footnotes would be of use to the reader.

1. The date of Buddha is not known with certainty. It is generally agreed that he died at the age of eighty. According to the tradition current in Ceylon, whose people still follow the religion of Buddha, he died in 544 B.C. This date was adopted by the Government of India in celebrating the 2,500th anniversary of the Great Decease (i.e. the *Parinirvana* of Buddha). The modern scholars, whose opinion ought to carry great weight, fix the event within a few years of 486 B.C.

The statement that the Jaina sect existed at least five hundred years before Buddha is not accepted by modern scholars.

2. The great emperor Asoka ascended the throne in about 269 B.C.
3. A pillar of Asoka was found by Firuz Shah Tughluq, Emperor of Delhi, at Topra, and another at Mirat. Both were removed by him to Delhi, but neither the Pandits nor the Maulavis could read the inscriptions engraved on them. Firuz Shah was, however, not a Mughal, but a Turk.
4. The inscriptions of Asoka, both in original and English translation, have been published in many works, now easily available.
5. It is not strictly accurate to say that Asoka prohibited the slaughter of animals altogether, or that he collected all sorts of plants for vegetable food as an alternative diet, before doing so. He forbade unnecessary slaughter of animals and cruelty to them. He also exempted from slaughter certain classes of animals on all days and probably all animals on a few specified days during the year.
6. Modern scholars do not believe in this and similar other legends. According to the more reliable evidence of Asoka's own records, it is the horrible massacre and misery of people caused by his invasion of Kalinga that turned Asoka towards the religion of Buddha, and induced him to forswear war in future.

INDIA'S INFLUENCE ON THE THOUGHT AND CULTURE OF THE WORLD THROUGH THE AGES

Introduction

To an average European of the early 19th century it was unthinkable that the Hindus of India could influence any other civilization, for he regarded them as little better than barbarians or even savages. Such a belief was founded on the views and writings of eminent Englishmen. More than half a century after the establishment of British rule in Bengal an eminent Governor-General, the Marquess of Hastings (1813-23), observed: "The Hindoo appears a being nearly limited to mere animal functions . . . with no higher intellect than a dog and an elephant, or a monkey . . . such a people can at no period have been more advanced in civil polity."

Such a view was by no means confined to statesmen and politicians of Britain. Even James Mill, whose voluminous *History of British India* was published in 1818, sought to prove "that the abject condition in which the English found them in the eighteenth century represents their normal condition throughout their history". He ridicules the 'hypothesis of a high state of civilisation' propounded by Sir William Jones in regard to the ancient Hindus and observes:

"Their laws and institutions are adapted to the very state of society which those who visit them now behold, such as could neither begin, nor exist, under any other than one of the rudest and weakest states of the human mind. As the manners, the arts and sciences of the ancient Hindus are entirely correspondent with the state of their laws and institutions, everything we *know* of the ancient state of Hindustan conspires to prove that it was rude."

Mill further observed that the "Hindu excels in the qualities of a slave," and "in the still more important qualities, which constitute what we call the moral character, the Hindu ranks very low."

Even the account of the Indologists about the ancient Indian civilization could not make any impression on Mill and other British historians. Those

who could not altogether ignore the views of a galaxy of European savants about the notable traits in Hindu civilization, took shelter under the comfortable belief that the Indians must have borrowed them from the Greeks. Even when there was a definite reference to the trade and maritime activity of India in a book written in the early centuries of the Christian era, Elphinstone tacitly assumed that the trade 'was conducted by Greeks and Arabs'. The Trigonometric *Sine* is not mentioned by Greek mathematicians, but was used in India from about the fourth century A.D. Nevertheless, Paul Tannery, famous for his studies on ancient mathematics, was so firm in his conviction (or instinct?) that the Indians could not have made any mathematical inventions, that he preferred to assume that *Sine* was really a Greek idea borrowed by the Indians.

The Europeans, with their minds steeped in the conviction of the immeasurable debt that their culture and civilization owed to the Greeks, naturally came to believe that the same thing was true of the civilization—both ancient and modern—all over the world. To what length such views might extend is best illustrated by the following statement of Herr Niese, a German scholar, in a book published in 1893: "It may therefore be reasonably concluded that it was from Alexander's institutions that all further development of Indian culture was derived." Such a statement may appear today to be too ridiculous to be seriously considered, but was accepted by English writers of repute and may be taken to reflect the views of Europeans in general outside the very narrow circle of those who devoted themselves specially to Indian studies.

It is a curious coincidence that the very year in which Niese's book was published also saw Swami Vivekananda proclaiming the superiority of Hindu culture in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago (U.S.A.) before an august assembly of representatives from all parts of the world. So strong was the current view that even the great Swami believed that he had broken an altogether new ground by preaching the doctrines of Hinduism outside India. In course of a lecture delivered at Pamban, after his return from U.S.A. he observed: "Since the dawn of history, no missionary went out of India to propagate the Hindu doctrines and dogmas." As a matter of fact, Swami Vivekananda did not initiate a new process, but, unconscious-

ly, revived an old one which had been at work for nearly a thousand years and then remained in abeyance for an equal length of time. This adds a special significance to the mission of Swamiji in the West. The greatness of a nation, like that of an individual, may be measured not only by its material, moral and intellectual achievements, but also by the service it has rendered to others in these spheres. Judged from this point of view the greatness of the ancient Hindus (taken in the original sense of peoples of India) may be estimated from the extent to which they have contributed to the material prosperity and the moral, religious, and intellectual advancement of peoples outside their own country. What Swamiji has done in this direction in modern times has been described in this Volume by several distinguished writers. As a background to this study we may briefly describe the influence of Indian culture over the outside world in olden times.

Preliminary Remarks

A significant trait of the personal character in ancient India is self-effacement. There was no desire on the part of any individual (except the king) to advertise his own achievement, or to seek to immortalise himself by any laudatory record. This was carried to such an excess that we know today very little or practically nothing of the great personalities that shed lustre on ancient India by their contribution to the development of art, literature, philosophy, religion, law, politics, and various other spheres of human thoughts and activities. This was not merely true of an individual but also of the nation as a whole. Ancient India has left no record of the brilliant achievements of her own sons in foreign lands, but we know from other records that they were indeed very great. The contribution of Greece and Rome to the development of European civilization is known to all, but few are aware of the well-established historical fact that the debt which Asian civilization owes to India is by no means less. The great things that the Indians did outside India are not to be found in the record of this country, but we possess abundant evidence in the record of foreign countries to reconstruct a general outline of the nature and extent of Indian influence

in countries outside her boundary. For the sake of convenience we may divide this sphere of influence broadly into three zones, namely, (1) West, (2) North and North-East, and (3) East and South-East. This geographical classification also roughly corresponds to a division according to the type and degree of influence exerted by India, as well as the nature of evidence on which our knowledge is based. In the West the influence was indirect, mostly confined to thoughts and ideas, and the evidence is circumstantial. We have more positive evidence in the North in the shape of literature and archaeological remains which conclusively prove a very close and intimate contact with, and a deep influence exerted by, India, but do not supply sufficient materials to form an adequate and integrated picture. It is in South-East Asia alone that we have contemporary inscriptions and monuments, in sufficiently large number, to enable us to form an adequate idea of Indian influence in all spheres of culture. Before proceeding further, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that though the object of this paper is merely to trace the influence of India on the outside world, it should not lead anyone to infer that India herself was not similarly influenced by other countries. India did borrow freely from many peoples, and sometimes openly acknowledged such borrowing. It seems to be an almost universal law in history that whenever two peoples come in contact by trade, conquest, or other means, they borrow each other's ideas, the extent of such borrowings being mostly in inverse ratio to the relative superiority of their cultures. India undoubtedly borrowed from other countries, but it was never a one-way traffic. If India became subject to the influence of others, she in her turn contributed to the development of other cultures and civilizations. It is only this latter aspect of the contact between India and the outside world that we shall discuss here. For reasons stated above, we may now proceed to discuss, in succession, the influence of India upon the countries lying to her West, North, East and South.

Western Countries

It has now been established on good authority that since remote antiquity—perhaps even as far back as 2000 B.C.—India had contact with Western

countries both by land and sea. Trade must have been the chief incentive, and we have evidence, both literary and archaeological, of Indian goods being imported into Western Asia and Egypt in the second millennium B.C., if not earlier still. The exchange of goods probably also led to exchange of ideas. There are numerous speculations on the subject but no definite conclusion is possible. Mention may be made in this connection of the discovery of the names of Vedic gods and Indian numerals in the Hittite records of c. 1400 B.C. found at Boghaz Keui in Armenia. The fact remains that the forms in which these gods, Indra, Mitra, Varuna and Nasatya appear in these records are different from Iranian but analogous to Vedic ones. Many scholars have therefore concluded that even at this remote period the Vedic culture made its influence felt in this region of Western Asia. But this conclusion is not agreed to by all. We are on somewhat firmer ground in regard to philosophical speculations. There is a general consensus of opinion that the Greek philosophy was profoundly influenced by the Indian. Many eminent scholars hold that the Pythagorean philosophy was derived from the *Samkhya* system of India. The European writers, who were loath to believe this, were driven to conclude that the resemblances between the tenets of the earlier Greek philosophers and those of the Indian sages were mere coincidences, because the evidence for intercourse was entirely lacking. It should be remembered, however, that the cultural contact between India and the West was facilitated in the sixth century B.C., when Pythagoras lived, by the establishment of the Achaemenian empire which extended from India to Greece, and for some time included parts of both these countries. Of far greater interest in this connection is a statement of Eusebius to the following effect:

"Aristoxenus, the musician, tells the following story about the Indians. One of these men met Socrates at Athens, and asked him what was the scope of his philosophy. 'An enquiry into human phenomenon', replied Socrates. At this the Indian burst out laughing. 'How can a man enquire into human phenomena', he exclaimed, 'when he is ignorant of divine ones?'" Aristoxenus being the pupil of Aristotle, who was a junior contemporary of Plato, a close and devoted friend of Socrates, he might have heard of the conversation from reliable sources. The reported dialogue, brief

though it is, brings out very clearly the characteristic difference between Indian and Greek approach to problems of human life. It proves in any case that at least as early as fifth century B.C. an Indian philosopher made the long and tedious journey to Greece and acquired enough knowledge of Greek language and philosophy to be able to hold discourses with eminent philosophers like Socrates. It would not also be unreasonable to conclude that this Indian philosopher did not stand alone, and there were other cases of this kind. Further, there can be hardly any doubt that the viewpoint of the Indian philosopher, so characteristically different from the current Greek notion, must have deeply impressed both Aristoxenus, who remembered and reported the dialogue many years after it had taken place, and Eusebius who thought fit to preserve it for posterity. If, therefore, we accept his reported dialogue as substantially correct—and there is no reason to do otherwise—we may reasonably conclude that there was an impact of Eastern on Western thought even in the days of Socrates (5th century B.C.).

If an Indian philosopher could visit Socrates in Greece, we may well believe that Pythagoras also probably met with an Indian philosopher, either in Greece, or in some place in Western Asia, as a journey from India to either place was not more difficult then than at the time of Socrates. As Schroeder has pointed out, not one or two chance ideas, but almost all the doctrines ascribed to Pythagoras, both religio-philosophical and mathematical, were current in India. As the most important of them appear in Pythagoras without connection or explanatory background, whilst in India they are rendered comprehensible by the intellectual life of the times, Schroeder definitely pronounces India to be the birthplace of the ideas. The same view was emphatically asserted by Colebrooke and it is shared by Garbe. Later writers like Keith and Rawlinson dismiss the theory that Pythagorean philosophy owed anything to India. Rawlinson admits that his view rests mainly on the fact that before the days of Alexander there was no direct communication between India and Greece. "A journey to India," says he, "except under very unusual circumstances, was at that time almost a physical impossibility." The story of Aristoxenus, quoted above, cuts the ground from under his feet. Equally untenable are the arguments by which he seeks to explain away the resemblances between the early Greek and

Indian philosophic doctrines. He refers to the doctrine of Metempsychosis, but says that "we may suppose" that the Greeks might have derived it from Thrace. "The Pythagorean tabus on wine, animal food, etc.," he admits, "remind the reader of Buddhism." But, he points out, Pythagoras lived before Gautama. The fact, however, is that the abstinence from wine and animal food formed parts of the many pre-existing ideas which both Jainism and Buddhism incorporated in their doctrines. Rawlinson argues that "the *ahimsa* doctrine of Buddhism, shared also by the Brahmins and Jains, was a later development." The erroneous character of this notion may be easily demonstrated by the evidence of religious literature of India. It will suffice to point out that Mahavira, the reputed founder of Jainism, inherited the four cardinal doctrines of the faith—the first of which was *ahimsa*—from his predecessor Parsva, who is now recognized by European scholars as a historical personage living probably in the eighth century B.C., and in any case long before Pythagoras. Garbe has pointed out numerous other coincidences between Indian and Greek philosophy. "He has referred to the most striking resemblance between the doctrine of the All-One in the Upanishads and the philosophy of the Eleatics, and between the theory of Thales, the father of Greek philosophy, that everything sprung from water, and the Vedic idea of the primeval water out of which the universe was evolved. He has also traced fundamental ideas of the *Samkhya* philosophy among the Greek physiologists such as Anaximander, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus and Epicurus." Others have pointed out that Plato was familiar with the doctrine of *Karma*.

It is now generally held that the invasion of India by Alexander (327-325 B.C.) established the contact between East and West which was never entirely lost since then. Apart from literature and travellers' accounts, we have numerous incidental notices of India which together constitute a voluminous record of the knowledge of India in the West. It is not difficult to trace from these writings the particular aspects of Indian thoughts and culture which made a deep impress upon the Greek minds. A sure test of this is provided by the enthusiasm with which an idea or an event is recorded and the number of times it is repeated by different authors. An illustration is provided by an episode associated with Alexander himself, which

may be described at some length. Shortly after crossing the border of India Alexander felt interested in the Indian gymnosophists (ascetics), and, desirous of learning the doctrines of the sect, sent for their teacher and president, whose name is written by the Greeks as Dandamis. Onesicritus, who was despatched to fetch him, found him lying on a pallet of leaves in the wood. Onesicritus addressed the ascetic in right military fashion: "Hail to thee, thou teacher of the Bragmanes (Brahmanas)! The son of the mighty god Zeus, king Alexander, who is the sovereign lord of all men, asks you to go to him, and if you comply, he will reward you with great and splendid gifts, but if you refuse, will cut off your head."

"Dandamis, with a complacent smile, heard him to the end, but did not so much as lift up his head from his couch of leaves, and while still retaining his recumbent attitude returned this scornful answer:—"God, the supreme king, is never the author of insolent wrong, but is the creator of light, of peace, of life, of water, of the body of man, and of souls, and these he receives when death sets them free, being in no way subject to evil desire. He alone is the god of my homage, who abhors slaughter and instigates no wars. But Alexander is not God, since he must taste of death. Know this, however, that what Alexander offers me, and the gifts he promises, are all things to me utterly useless; but the things which I prize, and find of real use and worth, are these leaves which are my house, these blooming plants which supply me with dainty food, and the water which is my drink. Should Alexander cut off my head, he cannot also destroy my soul. My head alone, now silent, will remain, but the soul will go away to its Master, leaving the body like a torn garment upon the earth, whence also it was taken. I then, becoming spirit, shall ascend to my God, who enclosed us in flesh, and left us upon the earth to prove whether when here below we shall live obedient to his ordinances, and who also will require of us, when we depart hence to his presence, an account of our life, since he is judge of all proud wrong-doing; for the groans of the oppressed become the punishments of the oppressors.

"Let Alexander, then, terrify with these threats those who wish for gold and for wealth, and who dread death, for against us these weapons are both alike powerless, since the Bragmanes neither love gold nor fear death. Go,

then, and tell Alexander this: 'Dandamis has no need of aught that is yours, and therefore will not go to you, but if you want anything from Dandamis come you to him.'

"Alexander, on receiving from Onesicritus a report of the interview, felt a stronger desire than ever to see Dandamis, who, though old and naked, was the only antagonist in whom he, the conqueror of many nations, had found more than his match."

It may be noted that this episode, which is mentioned, either briefly or at length, by several Greek writers, embodies the pith of the spiritual teachings of India, and emphasizes the characteristic differences between early Greek and Indian philosophic thoughts.

The typically philosophical doctrine and attitude represented by Dandamis made its influence felt in the Greek world. The best evidence of this is furnished by Neoplatonism, the last school of pagan philosophy which grew up mainly among the Greeks of Alexandria from the 3rd century A.D. onwards. It was dominated by one all-pervading interest—the religious. It introduced a new first principle into philosophy, viz. the supra-rational, that which is beyond reason and beyond reality. It perceived that neither sense-perception nor rational cognition is a sufficient basis or justification for religious ethics. It had therefore to find out a new world and a new spiritual function. The Neoplatonist strove by meditation to free his soul from the body and to attain union with the Supreme. All this as well as the other doctrines it inculcates, such as abstinence from flesh, subjection of the body by asceticism, etc. show unmistakable influence of Indian philosophy and religion.

It is very significant that shortly before the rise of Neoplatonism, Pantaenus, a Christian missionary, visited India. Clemens of Alexandria, who died about 220 A.D., gives interesting information of India, mostly derived from this Pantaenus, who was his tutor. Clemens says, among other things, that the Brahmins take no wine and abstain from flesh; they despise death and set no value on life, because they believe in transmigration. Evidently these ideas were looked upon as novel, and peculiarly Indian. It is also interesting to note that Clemens makes a general statement that "Philosophy, with all its blessed advantages to man, flourished long

ages ago among the barbarians, diffusing its light among the gentiles, and eventually penetrated into Greece."

Religion formed the most important element in culture in the ancient world. There is abundant evidence to show that Indian religion—both Buddhist and Brahmanical—spread to the West. The great Maurya Emperor Asoka (c. 273-236 B.C.) expressly states in his epigraphic records that missionaries were sent by him to Western countries, and specifically refers by name to five Greek rulers whose courts were visited by them. These were Antiochus of Syria, Ptolemy of Egypt, Magas of Cyrene, Antigonus of Macedonia and Alexander of Epirus. Asoka claims that as a result of his missionary efforts Buddhism obtained a definite footing in those Hellenistic monarchies of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and there is no reason to discredit this claim altogether. An inscription of Asoka written in Greek and Aramaic languages, recently discovered near the old city of Kandahar in Afghanistan, supplies further and more positive evidence about the spread of Buddhism in the West. That these missionary activities bore fruit and Buddhism flourished in the West for a long time is proved by the statement of Alberuni (c. 1030 A.D.) that in former times Buddhism prevailed in Khurasan, Persia, Irak, Mosul and the country up to the frontier of Syria.

Not only Buddhism but Brahmanical religion also prevailed in Western Asia. According to the Syrian writer Zenob there was an Indian colony in the Canton of Taron in the Upper Euphrates, to the west of Lake Van, as early as the second century B.C. The Indians built there two temples containing images of gods about 18 and 22 ft. high. When about 304 A.D. St. Gregory came to break these temples, he was strongly opposed by the Indians. But he defeated them and broke the images.

The facts culled above leave no doubt that Indian religion, both Brahmanical and Buddhist, was still a living force in the region where Christianity arose and had its early field of activity. It strengthens the belief that similarities noticed between the two may not be accidental, but, to a certain extent, due to the influence of the old religion upon the new. The resemblance of the interior of the Christian Church to a Buddhist Chaitya, the extreme and extravagant forms of asceticism in early Christian sects,

such as the Thebaid monasticism, metempsychosis, relic-worship, and the use of the rosary, might all have been borrowed by Christianity from Indian religious ideas.

It is also very likely that the Manichaeans and the Gnostics were influenced by Indian ideas. Manichaeism, founded by Mani, a high-born Persian of Ecbatana, in the third century A.D., soon became one of the great religions of the world. It rapidly spread in Persia, Mesopotamia, Transoxiana and Turkestan as far as the Chinese frontier. After 330 A.D. it spread rapidly in the Roman Empire and in Rome itself gained a large amount of support, specially among the scholars and public teachers. The seat of its central authority was for centuries at Babylon and removed later to Samarkand. It survived the onslaught of Islam and flourished till the 15th century A.D.

F. C. Baur first pointed out that Manichaeism was influenced by Buddhism. There is no doubt that Mani visited India and made himself familiar with the doctrines of Buddha. A Manichaean treatise is written in the form of a Buddhist *Sutra* and refers to its founder Mani as *Tathagata* i.e. Buddha. It also mentions Buddha and the Bodhisattva. Most modern scholars have accepted the view of Baur, and according to Kessler, Mani made use of the teachings of Buddha, at least so far as ethics was concerned. There is also a great resemblance between their views on asceticism. Of course, as is usual in such cases, some scholars minimise the importance of Buddhist influence on Manichaeism, and regard the points of resemblance as accidental. It is interesting to note in this connection that Terebinthus assumed the name of Buddha and declared that he was a new Buddha. "Terebinthus was the disciple of Scythianus, who was a Saracen born in Palestine, and who traded with India. In his visits to India, Scythianus acquired knowledge of Indian philosophy, and, settling afterwards in Alexandria, made himself conversant with the lore of Egypt. With the help of Terebinthus, he embodied in four books the peculiar doctrines which are said to have formed the basis of those of the Manichaeans." It is also to be remembered that the West was familiar with Buddhism and Brahmanical religion of India from the writings of famous Christians such as Bardaisan (Bardesanes) who flourished in the second century A.D.

Gnosticism was a spiritual movement, existing side by side with

Christianity, and though a distinct religious syncretism, was strongly influenced by it. Gnosticism came into prominence early in the second century A.D., reached its height about the middle of the same century, began to decline in the third century, and was gradually replaced by Manichaeism. Gnosticism was a mystic religion and its votaries believed that they, i.e. the initiated, alone possessed a secret and mysterious knowledge which must be believed, without proof, by the initiated, and must be kept a secret from outsiders. There were rites and ceremonies—initiation and consecration, etc.,—the ultimate goal being individual salvation. This meant that the soul, on leaving the body after death, would reach the highest heaven—its home—after defeating the demons, who obstructed his way, with the help of the sacred symbols and formulas which were known only to the initiated.

There is no doubt that the Gnostic religion and philosophy have a decidedly oriental character. It is now generally admitted that Gnosticism shows traces of Hindu influence. Some of its ideas and ceremonies, particularly the role played by the Primal Man, the Mother-Goddess, and the sexual immorality as essential parts of the cult, remind one of the Tantric cult in India. The fully developed form of this cult in India appears much later, but the ideas underlying it can be traced to a much earlier date. Among other features of Gnosticism, specially characteristic of Indian philosophy and religion, are the doctrine of the plurality of heavens, the three qualities (three *gunas*) and transmigration of soul.

Buddhism and the story of Buddha's life were familiar themes in Western literature. Clemens, mentioned above, refers to the building of *stupas* by the Buddhists for enshrining divine relics. Archelaus of Carrha (3rd century A.D.) and St. Jerome (4th century A.D.) refer to the Buddha. Curiously enough, John of Damascus (8th century A.D.) narrated the life of Buddha as the life of a Christian saint. The result was that Gautama, the Bodhisattva, under the guise of Saint Josaphat, made his way into the Christian Church and was included in the Martyrology of Gregory XIII (1582).

We may now turn to literature. It is always a difficult task to estimate the influence of one literature upon another, unless we have translations or clear adaptation of a book from one language into another. Judging by this

test we may regard the folk literature of India as having exercised a great influence not only in the West but over the whole world. Of one specific book of this branch of literature we have some detailed knowledge. This is the *Panchatantra* or a book of fables containing wise maxims. It was translated first from Sanskrit into Pehlevi, and then from Pehlevi into Arabic and Syrian. The Arabic translation made the book well-known all over the Western world and it was rendered into Persian, Hebrew, Latin, Spanish, Italian and various other languages of Europe and Asia. As Max Müller remarked, "the triumphant progress of this work from India to the west is more wonderful and instructive than the stories it contained." According to Hertel, the greatest authority on the subject, there are more than two hundred versions of *Panchatantra* in more than fifty languages, of which three-fourths are non-Indian. The translation into Pehlevi was made by Burzuyeh in collaboration with an Indian scholar during the reign of the Sassanian King Chosroes Anushirwan (531-79 A.D.) and under his patronage. The Pehlevi version was translated about 570 A.D. into the old Syriac, and about the middle of the eighth century A.D., into Arabic by the orders of Caliph al-Mansur (A.D. 754-775). It was again translated into Arabic in the 9th century A.D. and through these translations was introduced into the fable literature of Europe.

One interesting feature of the Javanese version of the work may be mentioned here. According to the introduction in the Indian version, the stories were told by one Vishnunarman for the edification of his dull pupils of the royal family. The Javanese version is very different, and is associated with a king of Pataliputra, named Aisvaryapala and referred to as a descendant of Samudra-gupta, one of the greatest emperors in ancient India. King Aisvaryapala required a virgin every night and killed her in the morning. The task of procuring virgins fell upon his minister, and at last his own daughter was selected. She adopted the device of telling unfinished stories which so charmed the King that the execution was put off from day to day till the King's mind was changed. It is impossible not to find in this story a clear echo of the Arabian *Thousand and one Nights*. Another feature in common between the two is the emboxing of stories. How far these indicate Indian influence on the Arab story-book it is difficult to say.

It is true that the Javanese introductory episode has not so far been found in any Indian version of the book. But that the introductory story had an Indian origin may be inferred from the name of the Indian king Samudragupta. It was not a traditional name, well-known in Indian history, and, as a matter of fact, has not yet been found in Indian literature, being only known from epigraphic records discovered in modern times. The occurrence of the name of such a king, with correct mention of his capital city Pataliputra, seems to indicate that the Javanese author must have derived the information from an Indian version now lost to us.

Like literature the scientific achievements of the Hindus also influenced the Western countries. The Iranian scholar Burzuyeh, who translated the *Panchatantra* into Pehlevi, as mentioned above, visited India and acquired proficiency in Indian medicine and other sciences. It is also held by many scholars that the later Greek physicians were well acquainted with Hindu medicine. More definite evidence is available with regard to the Arabs. There was an intimate intercourse between Arabia and India, particularly during the reigns of Al-Mansur (A.D. 754-75) and Harun Al-Rashid (786-809), and several Indian embassies came to their courts. These embassies were accompanied by Indian scholars who taught the Arabs medical science, astronomy, mathematics and other sciences. The founder of the famous Barmak family of ministers was originally a Buddhist high-priest in Balkh, and this family induced Indian scholars to come to Baghdad and engaged them to translate Sanskrit books on medicine, pharmacology, toxicology, philosophy, astronomy, astrology, algebra, arithmetic and other subjects into Arabic. Arab scholars were also sent to India in large numbers to learn those sciences at first hand from Indian authorities. A number of standard Hindu treatises on medicine, materia medica and therapeutics were translated into Arabic by order of the Caliph Harun Al-Rashid (A.D. 786-809). These included, among others, such famous works as the *Charaka*, the *Susruta*, the *Nidana*, and the *Ashtanga* of Vagbhata. The *Susruta* was translated by an Indian whose name is written in Arabic as Mankh. He cured Harun Al-Rashid of a severe illness and was appointed by the grateful Caliph the head of the Royal Hospital.

As regards astronomy Al-Biruni tells us that the "star-cycles, as known

through the canon of Alfazari and Ya'kub Ibn Tarik, were derived from a Hindu who came to Baghdad as a member of the political mission which Sindh sent to the Khalif Almansur, A.H. 154." (A.D. 771). Again, we learn from the same source, that the Hindu traditions regarding the distances of the stars were communicated to Ya'kub Ibn Tarik by "the well-known Hindu scholar who, A.H. 161 (A.D. 778), accompanied an embassy to Baghdad." The two great works of Brahmagupta, namely, the *Brahma-sphuta-siddhanta* and the *Khandakhadyaka*, were translated into Arabic, and taught the Arabs the scientific system of astronomy. The Hindu system of numerals, by which all the figures are expressed today with the help of nine digits and zero, was also borrowed from India by Arabia and through her (unless directly from India) was spread all over the world. Macdonell observes in his *History of Sanskrit Literature* :

"In Science, too, the debt of Europe to India has been considerable. There is, in the first place, the great fact that the Indians invented the numerical figures used all over the world. The influence which the decimal system of reckoning dependent on those figures has had not only on mathematics, but on the progress of civilisation in general can hardly be over-estimated. During the eighth and ninth centuries the Indians became the teachers in arithmetic and algebra of the Arabs, and through them of the nations of the West. Thus, though we call the latter science by an Arabic name, it is a gift we owe to India."

Northern and North-Eastern Regions

CENTRAL ASIA

The territory lying between the Indus and the Hindukush Mountains was both politically and culturally an integral part of India until its conquest by the Arab Muslims in the seventh century A.D. The territory beyond that, up to the borders of China, roughly the region now known as Central Asia, was also profoundly influenced by Indian culture. The Sassanians of the third century A.D. regarded Bactriana as virtually an Indian country and the Oxus, a river of Buddhists and the Brahmanas. The Greek writers

always cite Bactriana with India and state that thousands of Brahmanas and Samanas (Buddhist monks) reside there.

The region further east, the Chinese Turkestan, is today an inhospitable tract being surrounded by mountains and almost entirely covered by the great desert of Taklamakan. But all along the northern and southern borders of the desert modern archaeological excavations have unearthed from under the sands, nearly 30 ft. deep, ruins of a large number of cities which flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era before they were covered with sands by the encroachment of the desert area. Many, indeed most, of these sites, so far discovered, have proved to be old Indian colonies. The most prominent among these were Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan, Kuchi, Kara Shahr and Yen-ki (Agni-desā). It is not possible, nor necessary for our present purpose, to give a detailed account of the archaeological finds in each of these localities, and a general account must suffice.

Buddhism was the prevailing religion in all these localities. This is proved not only by the discovery of images and the remains of Buddhist *stupas*, shrines and *viharas* built after Indian models, but also by a large number of Buddhist texts, written in Sanskrit and Prakrit as well as in local languages of Central Asia, and in Indian scripts, both Brahmi and Kharoshthi. Large numbers of secular documents have also been discovered. These are written in Indian languages and scripts on wooden tablets, leather, paper and silk. The wooden tablets were used for short communications of an official character, such as instructions to the local officials by the *Mahanuava Maharaya* (*Mahanubhava Maharaja* or the high-souled great king), or information of a personal or official nature issued by one official to another. We find therein reference to law-suits, inventories, list of provisions or presents, arrangements of guards, appointments, transport of arms, etc.

Some of them contain the names of ruling princes, officials and their relations. The documents on leather and paper are similar in character. A short text on a silk strip preserves fragments of a letter or order. Another document on silk contains nine inscriptions in Prakrit including a prayer for the health of an individual and his family. It is interesting to note that some of the phrases used in the prayer are almost identical with those found in the Indian inscriptions of the Kushana period. It may be added that

many documents in non-Indian languages were written in Indian script, and tablets containing complete alphabets of the Brahmi script have been found in Central Asia.

Most of the documents are in the form of letters with the names of the addressees written on the covering tablet. Many of the persons who wrote them, or to whom they were sent, bear names which are either purely Indian such as Bhima, Bangusena, Nandasena, Shamasena, Sitaka, Upajiva, etc., or else look like Indian adaptations such as Angacha, Kushanasena, etc. Some of the official designations are also Indian, for example, *chara* (spy), *dutiya* or *duta* (envoy). Stein has pointed out how the style of writing in these records follows closely the instructions given in the Kashmirian manual, *Lekhaprakasa*.

These documents were probably written during the first four centuries of the Christian era. The use of Indian language, style and script for purposes of administration, as far as the Lop-Nor region to the extreme east of the Tarim basin, at the very threshold of China, shows the extent of the political influence of Indian colonists.

Khotan seems to be a particularly important centre of Indian colonisation. A Kharoshthi inscription refers to the Khotanese king, *Maharaja Rajatiraja deva* Vijita-Simha. About forty coins were found here bearing Chinese legends on the obverse and Indian Prakrit ones in Kharoshthi characters on the reverse. Like the documents mentioned above, these also indicate that the language and scripts used by the local administration were Indian.

Taken as a whole, the artistic remains—architecture, sculpture and painting—and the large number of written texts, discovered in Central Asia, constitute a massive and most enduring monument of Indian culture and civilization which must have been widely spread all over the region in the early centuries of the Christian era. Although Buddhism was the prevailing religion, Brahmanical culture was not altogether absent. This is proved by the seals with effigies of Kubera and Trimukha, discovered at Niya, and the painted Ganesa at Endere. Both Hinayana and Mahayana forms of Buddhism were prevalent, but by far the largest number of paintings and sculptures belongs to the latter.

The Chinese pilgrims, Fa-hien and Hiuen-Tsang, who travelled through this region in course of their pilgrimage to India, has left interesting accounts of a large number of famous Buddhist monasteries, testifying thereby to the dominance of Indian cultural influence down at least to the seventh century A.D. Particular reference is made to Khotan which was a very important centre of Buddhism. Its famous monastery, Gomati-vihara, was one of the biggest institutions of Buddhist learning in Central Asia. A number of able Indian scholars lived there, and many Chinese pilgrims, instead of coming to India for special instruction, stayed in Khotan. The learned monks of Gomati-vihara composed texts which were regarded almost as canonical.

The archaeological evidence certainly lends some colour to the tradition that Khotan was colonised by Indians and ruled by Indian chiefs. This tradition, with a long list of Indian kings, is preserved in Tibetan literature.

In conclusion, we may emphasize the fact that, as in religion and literature, so in art, Central Asia was deeply influenced by India. Sten Konow has stressed the close agreement which exists in regard to general architectural arrangement between all Turkestan *stupas* examined by him and the corresponding structures extant in the Kabul valley and on the Indian north-west frontier. He further remarks that "the art of Buddhist Khotan can be shown to have remained to the last under the predominating influence of Indian models". Though other influences, like Iranian and Chinese, might have been at work, the Graeco-Buddhist art of Gandhara contributed more than any other influence to shape the development of Buddhist art in Central Asia.

CHINA

China possessed a high degree of civilization but was profoundly influenced by Buddhism and other elements of Indian culture that flowed along with it. The date of the first introduction of Buddhism into China is not definitely known, but it cannot be placed later than the first century A.D. How Buddhist philosophy and religion gradually obtained dominance in China need not be described in detail. The essential features may be noted below :

Mou-tseu, a great Chinese scholar (second century A.D.) pronounced Buddhism as even superior to the doctrines of Confucius. Buddhism was patronised by the rulers, and by the beginning of the fourth century A.D. it came to be an important factor in Chinese life. There were about 180 religious establishments accommodating more than three thousand Buddhist monks.

From the fourth century A.D. the progress of Buddhism in China was almost phenomenal. This was due to the visit of a large number of Indian monks who not only carried on missionary activities, but also translated a large number of Buddhist texts into Chinese with the help and co-operation of Chinese monks. The Chinese have fortunately preserved a long list of these Indian monks with short biographies. This shows that Indian monks did in China the same kind of work—though on a far more massive scale—as Swami Vivekananda did in the West fifteen hundred years later.

There was almost a craze among the rulers of China to invite Indian monks, to secure Buddhist texts from India, and to have them translated into Chinese. The Chinese Buddhists were also very eager to visit India and study at Nalanda not only Buddhist philosophy and literature, but also other subjects like Brahmanical philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and medicine. They were encouraged by the Chinese emperors who granted them all facilities for the long journey.

The most interesting aspect of Buddhism in China is the translation of a large number of Indian texts. Regular Boards were set up to expedite the work with the help of a large number of scholars, both Indian and Chinese, and sometimes even the Emperor and the Empress paid visits to see how the work was being done. Owing to this work of translation, undertaken on a colossal scale, the voluminous body of Sanskrit Buddhist literature, now almost entirely lost in India, has been preserved in Chinese translation. An idea of the bulk of this literature may be had from the various catalogues compiled in China from time to time. The oldest catalogue, compiled by a Chinese scholar in the sixth century A.D., mentions 2,213 works and the official catalogue, prepared about the same time at the orders of the Emperor, gives a list of Buddhist texts numbering about 5,400 volumes. An authoritative catalogue of the Buddhist canon prepared in the T'ang period

mentions in the first section 2,487 works in 8,476 *fasciculi*, and in the second, 799 works in 3,364 *fasciculi*. There were many other catalogues to which it is not necessary to refer in detail. The printing of these texts by wooden blocks began as early as A.D. 972.

Reference should be made to some other aspects of Indian culture which Buddhism brought along with it to China. The most important of these was art which exerted a great influence on the native traditions and produced a new school of art that may be called Sino-Indian.

The specimens of this art are furnished by a number of rock-cut caves at Tun-huang, Yan-kang, and Long-men, colossal images of Buddha, 60 to 70 ft. high, and fresco paintings on the walls of the caves. Three Indian painters—Sakyabuddha, Buddhakirti and Kumarabodhi—worked in China in the Wei period.

The origin of the peculiar type of Chinese temples with superimposed storeys may be traced to India. In fact the name 'Indian style' was given to a class of temples in China in the Song period. This style gradually found its way to Japan.

Indian music also exerted a great influence upon China. It was introduced by Indian musicians settled in Kuchi, and soon became very popular. A musical party went direct from India to China in A.D. 581.

Indian astronomy, mathematics and medicine were also popular in China. Indian astronomers were appointed on the official boards set up to prepare the calendars. There were three Indian astronomical schools, known as Gautama, Kasyapa and Kumara, in the capital city in the seventh century. The Indian system of nine planets was adopted in China and the translation of a Sanskrit astronomical work, *Navagraha-siddhanta*, is still to be found in the collection of the T'ang period. A number of Indian mathematical and astronomical works was translated at an earlier date, but they have been lost. Indian medical treatises were in great favour in China and Sanskrit medical texts were translated into Chinese.

TIBET

Intimate intercourse between India and Tibet began during the reign of the famous Tibetan king Sron-btsan-sgan-po, who ruled during the first

half of the seventh century A.D. He was converted to Buddhism through the influence of his two queens, one a princess of Nepal (in India), and another, a princess of China. He built temples and monasteries and introduced in his kingdom the Sanskrit language and the system of writing from India. This Indian alphabet, with some modifications, is still the only one in use in Tibet. A large number of Buddhist texts was translated into Tibetan. King Khri-sron-lde-btsan (A.D. 755-797), who made Buddhism the State religion in Tibet, invited Santarakshita, the High Priest of the University of Nalanda, and appointed him the High Priest of Tibet. Santarakshita, helped by another Indian monk, Padmasambhava, introduced the system of Buddhist monachism, which is now known as Lamaism, in Tibet. The famous temple of Bsam-yas was built in imitation of the temple of Odantapuri in Magadha (South Bihar). This temple still exists (at least existed before the recent Chinese aggression) and is situated about 35 miles from Lhasa. The successors of Khri-sron-lde-btsan followed his policy of translating sacred books, erecting temples and inviting Pandits from India. The most famous among those who visited Tibet was Dipankara Srijnana, called also Atisa. He was the High Priest of the University of Vikramasila (in Bihar) where a large number of Tibetans studied the Buddhist scriptures. Atisa, who agreed to proceed to Tibet after repeated invitations from the Tibetan King, was received with high honours at the frontier of Tibet. Four generals, with one hundred horsemen, received him and he was escorted in a procession carrying flags and playing various musical instruments. His journey through the country was of the nature of a royal tour, and he was everywhere hailed by all classes of people. The King arranged a grand ovation for him in the capital. Dipankara spent the remaining 13 years of his life in Tibet, preaching the pure doctrines of Buddhism and writing sacred texts. He reformed Buddhism in Tibet by eliminating Tantrik elements, and wrote about two hundred books. He was the spiritual guide and teacher of Bromton, the founder of the first grand hierarchy of Tibet. He died in A.D. 1053, and is even now remembered with deep veneration wherever Buddhism of the Tibet variety prevails.

Throughout the rule of the Buddhist Pala Kings, in Bengal and Bihar, from the 8th to the 12th century, A.D., Tibet was in close touch with India,



particularly with the great Universities of Nalanda and Vikramasila. She adopted many traits of Indian culture along with religion, such as the 60 years' cycle system. Many Indian monks visited Tibet and preached the new developments of Buddhism. In particular the mystic schools of Buddhism like Vajrayana and Sahajayana found great favour there. The vast literature of this religion, now lost in India, has been preserved in Tibetan translations, in the two voluminous collections known as *Bstan-hgyur* and *Bksh-hgyur*. They furnish positive testimony to the intimate connection between the two countries and the profound influence exercised by India upon the development of religious thought and literature, as well as many other aspects of culture in Tibet.

JAPAN

Buddhism and Indian culture spread from Central Asia, China, and Tibet to Mongolia, Korea, and Japan. Korea and Japan were greatly influenced by the Chinese Buddhists, and, in a later age, Tibet was an important centre of propagation of Buddhism, especially in Mongolia. But we have also evidence of direct intercourse between India and some of these countries.

Bodhisena, an Indian monk, visited China in A.D. 733. At the invitation of an Imperial Japanese envoy whom he met there he, accompanied by another Buddhist monk, proceeded to Japan in A.D. 736. On their arrival at the port of Naniwa (Osaka) they were received with great honour by the imperial messenger, the chief priest accompanied by a hundred others, masters of ceremonies, musicians, and high dignitaries of the foreign office. Bodhisena found both Buddhism and Sanskrit language already well-established in Japan, and carried on conversation with the Japanese Buddhist priest in Sanskrit. In 750 Bodhisena was appointed the head of the Buddhist Order in Japan and taught Sanskrit and the Mahayana doctrine in three different monasteries. He died in 760 and a *stupa* was erected over his remains. The Japanese syllabary in fifty phonetic sounds, which closely follows the Sanskrit alphabet and is undoubtedly based upon it, is attributed by some Japanese scholars to Bodhisena. The use of the Indian alphabet in Japan, however, dates probably from even an earlier

period, as fragments of palm-leaf manuscripts, written in Indian alphabets of the fourth century A.D., have been found in some monasteries of Japan. The palm-leaf manuscript at the Horiuzi monastery, which cannot be later than the sixth century A.D., was brought to Japan in A.D. 609.

The Buddhist monk, Buttetsu, who accompanied Bodhisena to Japan, gave lessons and demonstrations in Indian music and dance in the Nara University of Japan. The Indian system of seven musical notes (*Shadaja*, *Rishabha*, etc.) was highly admired and in great demand, both in religious assemblies and at the imperial court. Buttetsu taught Sanskrit and wrote a manual for teaching this language.

BURMA

There were land-routes between Eastern India and Burma, as well as easy communications by sea, either along the coast or by direct voyage from Bengal, Orissa, or Andhra. Indians in large numbers proceeded to Burma at the beginning of the Christian era, if not earlier, and established colonies and kingdoms in Upper and Lower Burma, as well as Arakan. Local traditions are still current in Burma about these early settlers who introduced Indian culture in the country. Of the first phase of this culture we get a general picture from the archaeological explorations which have yielded interesting finds such as written records, images, votive tablets (mostly terra-cottas), and religious structures. The records are written in Sanskrit, Pali, Mon and Pyu languages, and the alphabets used are either Indian, or derived from them. These records, which cover the period from the third or fourth to tenth century A.D., prove that Indian languages and literature, both Sanskrit and Pali, were cultivated, and Indian religions, both Brahmanical and Buddhist, were adopted by the people of Burma at a remote antiquity, certainly not later than the earlier centuries of the Christian era, and probably long before it. Both Saivism and Vaishnavism were known, and we can trace the existence of various sects of both Hinayana and Mahayana forms of Buddhism, and even the Tantric form of a somewhat debased character. Religious structures, particularly *stupas*, belonging to 5th-7th centuries A.D., images of Brahmanical and Buddhist deities of the Gupta style, extracts from Buddhist scriptures engraved on

gold plates in Indian alphabets of fifth or sixth century A.D., and a large number of Buddhist terra-cotta votive tablets in late Gupta alphabets, prove the dominance of Indian culture, introduced by colonists migrating both from Northern and Southern India during the first millennium of the Christian era. There were important centres of Indian culture at or near Prome, Pegu, Thaton and Pagan.

The second phase of Indian culture in Burma begins from the foundation of the kingdom of Pagan by Aniruddha (Burmese form Anawratha), who ruled from 1044 to 1077 A.D., and extended his authority over nearly the whole of Burma. The Hinayana form of Buddhism, hitherto current only in Lower Burma, was now firmly established all over the country, and it flourishes still today. Aniruddha had married an Indian princess, and their son, who assumed the Indian title Tribhuvanaditya Dharmaraja on his accession, maintained an intimate touch with India. Many Buddhists and Vaishnavas went from India and settled in his kingdom. On hearing from them the description of Indian temples, he designed and built the famous temple of Ananda, the master-piece of Burman architecture. Like his father, he also married an Indian princess.

The elements of Indian culture and civilization which continued to flourish in Burma, need not be described in detail as they are substantially present in the country even today. The only important change is the gradual disappearance of Brahmanical religion and the exclusive predominance of Theravada Buddhism. A few characteristic features alone may be noted.

The first is an attempt to locate in Burma the important events and sacred sites associated with Buddhism, and even with its founder, Gautama Buddha. Similarly, quite a large number of place-names, famous in India, has been applied to Burmese towns, such as Avanti, Mithila, Rajagriha, Vaisali, etc. All these indicate a deliberate attempt to create a new India.

Secondly, nowhere else, outside India and Ceylon, Pali, the language of the Buddhist canon, was adopted as a classic, and gave rise to a new literature, which has continued its unbroken career down to the present time. Even a brief outline of the very extensive Pali literature of Burma cannot be attempted here. It embraced not only the doctrine, monastic discipline and

philosophical speculations of Buddhism but also the grammar of the Pali language, and various secular subjects such as law and politics. The vast extent of this literature made it necessary to write a history of this literature, and there are two such treatises. This literary activity continues even today, following more or less the lines first traced in Burma as long ago as the twelfth century.

Thirdly, there was an extraordinary activity in architecture, sculpture and painting, which bore the stamp of Indian workmanship. This was due to the constant and intimate intercourse between India and Burma. For streams of merchants, artisans, Brahmins, soldiers, astrologers and Buddhist missionaries from India visited and settled in different parts of Burma, while the Burmese visited India in large numbers for purposes of trade and paying visit to holy shrines. The Ananda temple in Pagan, mentioned above, is the finest in the whole of Burma, and is, fortunately, still in a good state of preservation. There is no doubt of its Indian origin. Duroiselle, who has made a special study of the subject in recent times, observes:—

“There can be no doubt that the architects who planned and built the Ananda were Indians. Everything in this temple from Sikhara to basement, as well as the numerous stone sculptures found in its corridors and the terra-cotta plaques adorning its basement and terraces, bear the indubitable stamp of Indian genius and craftsmanship . . . In this sense, we may take it, therefore, that the Ananda, though built in the Burmese capital, is an Indian temple.”

The plain around Pagan, about one hundred square miles in area, is full of ruins and must have once been covered by numerous shrines, no less than 800 or 1000 in number. A few of them, in a fair state of preservation, are quite magnificent, and their plan is the same as that of Ananda, the difference being only in details.

INDO-CHINA AND INDONESIA

Some islands in Indonesia, notably Java, Sumatra, Bali and Borneo, together with Siam (now called Thailand), Malay Peninsula, Cambodia

and Annam (now called Viet Nam) in Indo-China constitute a region which, from the beginning of the Christian era, if not earlier, was visited by Indians—merchants, missionaries and valorous chiefs—for purposes, respectively, of trade, propagation of religion, and carving out kingdoms. The result was that in course of a few centuries a large number of kingdoms was established all over the region, which were ruled by kings with Indian names and where Indian culture in all its phases—social cum religious ideas and institutions, art, literature, language, script, legal system and administrative organizations—seems to have been almost bodily transplanted. A Greater India came into being and continued to flourish in great glory for about a thousand years, in course of which three great empires rose and fell. Gradually the indigenous people, civilized by the Indians, contributed their own elements, but these did not come into prominence till the Muslim conquest of India dried up the springs which fed the streams of civilization in Greater India. Up to that catastrophe, these remote regions resembled, to a large extent, the Dravidian-speaking countries in South India. But as soon as living contact with the Hindu culture was lost, Greater India lost its vitality and almost relapsed into a state of stagnation. Indian culture still prevails in Siam and Cambodia with Buddhism as the prevailing religion, and Brahmanical religion is still to be found in the small island of Bali. Islam reigns supreme in Malay Peninsula, Sumatra and Java, but strong traces of Hindu culture still persist in all these places. Borneo, which witnessed the performance of many a Vedic sacrifice, is now the seat of head-hunters.

As the culture in Greater India was practically a replica of that in India, it is unnecessary to describe it in detail. The most important mementos of the Hindu colonists are the Sanskrit inscriptions, written in Indian scripts, pure or slightly modified. They have been found all over the region, in Burma, Siam, Malay Peninsula, Annam, Cambodia, Sumatra, Java and Borneo. A perusal of these inscriptions shows that the language, literature, religion, and political and social institutions of India made a thorough conquest of these far-off lands and, to a large extent, eliminated or absorbed the native elements in these respects. The local people mostly belonged to a very primitive type of civilization, and it was the glorious mission of the

Indian colonists to introduce a higher culture among them. In this task they achieved a large measure of success.

These inscriptions, written in good and almost flawless Sanskrit, show that this language was highly cultivated and was in use at least in the court and among higher classes of society. They contain references to Hindu philosophical ideas, Vedic religion, Puranic and epic myths and legends, all the prominent Brahmanical and Buddhist gods and goddesses and the legends connected with them, and Indian months, astronomical system, and system of measurement. The well-known habit of colonists to introduce familiar geographical names is also in evidence.

The Puranic Brahmanical religion was dominant in Kambuja, and Buddhism, comparatively speaking, exercised less influence. Saivism was the most popular religion, though worship of Vishnu was also prevalent. The composite god Siva-Vishnu, under various names, was very well-known. The entire Hindu pantheon of Puranic deities was known in Kambuja, in their innumerable names and forms with which we are familiar in India. Even the mystic philosophy of Upanishads and the magical Tantric rites were not absent. In short, the Hindu religion, in all its aspects, prevailed in Kambuja to such an extent that to describe it in details would be to recount at length the religious history of India. The Indian *Sastras* (sacred scriptures) were studied and inscriptions frequently refer to Brahmanas proficient in *Veda*, *Vedanga*, *Samaveda*, and Buddhist scriptures, and kings and ministers possessing profound knowledge of the Dharmasastras. Arrangements were made in some temples for the daily recitation of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas, and it was considered a pious act to present copies of these texts to temples. The secular literature was also regularly studied. Inscriptions, earlier than ninth century A.D., refer to many of its branches such as *Sabda*, *Vaisesika*, *Nyaya*, *Samiksha*, and *Arthasastra*. Sanskrit Kavya was a very favourite subject of study.

The same observations apply to Java. Reference has been made at the beginning to an observation of Swami Vivekananda to the effect that no missionary had gone out of India before him to propagate the Hindu doctrines and dogmas. This can only be attributed to our ignorance of our past. There can be hardly any doubt that the propagation of Brahmanical

religion which predominated in Cambodia, Java, Bali and Borneo was the work of Hindu missionaries who went from India. There are many local traditions to this effect, but we have more authentic evidence. The following account of Tuen-Siun, a small State subject to Cambodia, is given by an Indian who actually visited the region :

"It contains five hundred Hu (probably of mercantile caste) families of India, two hundred Fo-tu (probably Buddhists), and more than a thousand Brahmans of India. The people of Tuen-siun follow their religion and give them their daughters in marriage, as most of these Brahmans settle in the country and do not go away. Day and night they read sacred scriptures and make offerings of white vases, perfumes and flowers to the gods."

Jayavarman II, one of the most famous kings of Kambuja, invited a priest from India to perform a difficult Tantrik ceremony and establish the *Devaraja* cult. The details of these were taught to a local priest and the king ordained that his family, and none else, should serve as the royal priest for these ceremonies. There is a long inscription containing 130 verses in Sanskrit, recorded by a descendant of the first priest, which gives a history of this priestly family for two hundred and fifty years. A Brahmana, named Divakara Bhatta, who, an inscription tells us, "was born on the bank of the river Yamuna, sacred with the associations of Krishna's boyhood", went to Kambuja and married the daughter of king Rajendrarvarman. An ancestor, on the mother's side, of Yasovarman, a famous king of Kambuja, was a Brahmana of Aryadesa versed in the Vedas and Vedangas. Another Brahmana named Sarvajnamuni, versed in the four Vedas and all the *Agamas*, devoted to Siva, and born in Aryadesa, came to Kambujadesa, and his descendants occupied high religious offices. There is also evidence that the learned Brahmanas of Kambuja visited India. We learn from an inscription that Sivasoma, the *guru* of Indravarman, learnt the Sastras from Bhagavat Sankara whose lotus feet were touched by the heads of all the sages. It has been rightly conjectured by the editor of the inscription that the reference is undoubtedly to the famous Sankaracharya, and presumably Sivasoma must have come to India to sit at the feet of the venerable Sankara. It may be noted in passing that as Indravarman lived towards the close of the ninth century A.D., Sivasoma must have flourished about

the middle of the ninth century A.D. which agrees with the date now generally assumed for Sankaracharya. As a matter of fact this Sanskrit inscription of Kambuja is the only authentic record for fixing the date of the great Sankaracharya of India.

There was quite a large number of hermitages (*asramas*)—homes of pious devotees who dedicated their lives to religious study and meditation. They were constructed by the generous donations of kings and rich men who made endowments to provide for all their necessities. King Yasovarman alone is said to have founded one hundred *asramas* in all parts of his kingdom. Detailed and definite regulations were issued by the king for the conduct of these *asramas*.

Quite a large number of Sanskrit inscriptions, written in Kavya style, has been discovered in Kambuja, some of them running to great lengths. Four inscriptions of Yasovarman contain respectively 50, 75, 93 and 108 verses each ; an inscription of Rajendravarman contains 218, and another, 298 verses.

The authors of these inscriptions have very successfully used almost all the Sanskrit metres, and exhibit a thorough acquaintance with the most developed rules and conventions of Sanskrit rhetoric and prosody. Besides, they show an intimate knowledge of the Indian Epics, Kavyas, Puranas, and other branches of literature, and a deep penetrating insight into Indian philosophical and spiritual ideas ; they are also saturated with the religious and mythological conceptions of the different sects of India—all this to an extent which may be justly regarded as marvellous in a community separated from India by thousands of miles. The prominent place occupied by religion in the life of the people is testified to even today by the large number of temples and images of gods and goddesses. But what strikes one particularly is that the people in Kambuja not only knew the external forms of Indian religion but were inspired by that ethical and spiritual view of life which was the most distinguishing feature of ancient Indian civilization. Anyone who carefully studies the inscriptions of Kambuja cannot fail to be deeply impressed by the spirit of piety and renunciation, a deep yearning for emancipation from the trammels of birth and evils of the world, and a longing for the attainment of the highest bliss by union with

Brahma, which are expressed with beauty and elegance in language at once sombre and sincere.

The same observations are applicable to Java, but here, in addition to inscriptions, we have an extensive Indo-Javanese literature. The oldest form of this literature, known as the Old-Javanese, is composed in the local language overlaid with Sanskrit like the old Tamil literature in India. One of the best and most well-known works in this literature is the *Ramayana* which is based upon, but not a translation of, the Sanskrit epic, and concludes with the reunion of Rama and Sita in Lanka. Next in importance is the prose translation of the *Mahabharata*, which closely follows the original but is more condensed. It supplied themes of various poetical works such as *Arjuna-Vivaha*, *Harivamsa*, *Krishnayana*, *Smaradahana* (Burning of Cupid), *Bhomakavya* (Episode of Bhoma or Naraka), *Bharata-Yuddha*, etc. The last-named, which gives an account of the great Bharata war, is written in simple but epic style, and its grandeur, according to eminent European critics, is comparable to that of the Greek epics. There are also prose works, such as *Brahmanda Purana* (based on the Sanskrit original), *Agastyaparva* (creation of the world in Puranic style), and *Sara-samuchchaya* (collection of moral precepts chiefly drawn from the *Mahabharata*). Various other works deal with law, religion, history, linguistics, and medicine. *Nitisara* or *Nitisastra* was an important poetical work consisting of a number of detached *slokas* (verses) containing wise sayings, maxims, moral precepts, etc., such as we find in Indian Sanskrit works called *Nitisara*, *Panchatantra*, *Chanakya-sataka*, etc.

Indian art played perhaps even a greater role than Indian literature. Ruins of hundreds of temples lie scattered all over the region and we can trace the gradual evolution of Indian artistic style in this remote land. The richness of this art in Greater India—both in architecture and sculpture—may be judged by the large number of temples and images which fortunately are still in a good state of preservation. Some of them, like the Angkor Vat and Bayan in Kambuja, and the Barabudur and Lora Jongrang in Java, have gained world-wide celebrity. Space would not permit even a bare mention of all the temples, and a brief reference to two of them must suffice.

The Barabudur, a Buddhist *stupa*, is a noble building about 400 ft. by 100 ft, consisting of a series of nine successive terraces, each receding a little from the one beneath it. Five of them have on the inner side a wall supporting a balustrade, offering space for sculptured panels, about 1500 in number, depicting scenes from the life of Buddha, and 432 images of Buddha,—all executed with an artistic skill and refinement recalling the best days of Indian art.

The Angkor Vat, a temple dedicated to Vishnu, is a massive pyramidal structure in three stages with sculptured galleries surrounding each of them, and a central tower on the third or highest one, more than 210 ft. above the ground level. The lowest gallery has a total running length of nearly 3000 ft., and all the three galleries are, so to say, continuous sculptured panels depicting the scenes from the *Mahabharata*. The moat or ditch running just outside the boundary wall is more than 650 ft. wide and has a total length of two miles and a half.

The artistic and literary remains that have survived the ravages by man and nature fully justify the title of Greater India applied to the extensive region in south-east Asia, defined above. It is the most eloquent testimony to the missionary efforts of Indians to spread Indian culture to the primitive races of this area. We learn from an almost contemporary Chinese testimony that when the Indians first reached Kambuja they found the local people—both men and women—going about naked. From this stage to the building of the Angkor Vat is a very high jump indeed—result of the steady progress of culture and civilization for more than a thousand years under the inspiration of Indian culture. That inspiration gradually ceased after India came under foreign domination in the thirteenth century. The result was disastrous for Greater India. After describing the artistic remains of Java till the overthrow of its last Hindu ruling dynasty by the Muhammadans in the 15th century A.D., Fergusson, the great authority on architecture, observes:

“Then occurred what was, perhaps, the least-expected event in all ‘this strange eventful history’. It is as if the masons had thrown away their tools, and the chisels had dropped from the hands of the carvers. From that

time forward no building was erected in Java, and no image carved, that is worth even a passing notice

"For nearly nine centuries (A.D. 603-1479) foreign (*i.e.* Indian) colonists had persevered in adorning the island with edifices almost unrivalled elsewhere of their class ; but at the end of that time, as happened so often in India, their blood had become diluted, their race impure, their energy effete, and, as if at the touch of a magician's wand, they disappeared. The inartistic native races resumed their sway, and art vanished from the land, never probably, again to reappear."

What Fergusson says of art in Java perhaps applies, more or less and *mutatis mutandis*, to the other aspects of culture also all over Greater India. In a general way it may be said that the decadence of Hindu culture in India from about 1300 A.D. synchronises with the lack of its missionary efforts outside India. The Indians kept no record of their splendid cultural achievements in Asia, and, as centuries rolled by, even the very memory of this glorious episode in their history passed away from the minds of the Hindus. When in the nineteenth century they were dazzled by the glare of Western civilization, about to conquer the whole of Asia, they could not conceive even in their wildest dreams that Hindu culture had played a similar role in the remote past. By an inscrutable dispensation of Providence the mantle of the old Hindu missionaries fell upon Swami Vivekananda. When he left the Indian shores as a cultural ambassador of India to the West, he unlocked the door, barred for a thousand years, and placed the cultural heritage of India again at the service of the whole world.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND HIS MESSAGE

Vivekananda's Advent : A Historical Necessity

To-day in the midst of the full blaze of our political independence, we recall with pride and reverence the hallowed memory of Swami Vivekananda who occupies a unique place in the shining galaxy of the illustrious sons of modern India. His advent into the arena of Indian life was a historical necessity. India, then under the political thumb of the British, was passing through a welter of cultural ideals as a result of the influx of occidental thought which, with its sparkling glamour, lured the unwary children of the soil into a position of utter helplessness through a silent process of intellectual, social and economic exploitation. Against such a tragic background, Swami Vivekananda whose short life we are attempting to depict in the following pages, was projected into the nineteenth century by the birth-throes of Nature as a mighty challenge to the ideology of the West. At the clarion-call of this heroic monk, the slumbering soul of India was stirred to its inmost depth and it expressed itself in a magnificent variety of creative activity. The accumulated spiritual forces of three hundred and thirty millions of people compressed themselves as it were into the multi-coloured life of this towering personality who set himself to the Herculean task of rebuilding the nation on the basis of a synthetic ideal bearing in it the best elements of the cultural contributions of the East and the West. The nation in which the great Swami was born leaped up into a full flame of life and regained its long-lost freedom in the course of a few decades, and the rest of the world also did not escape the overmastering influence of his life-giving message. Consciously or unconsciously, it has begun to weave into the texture of its cultural life the explosive ideas of this dynamic soul for the reconstruction of a social order in the corporate life of mankind.

Ancestry and Childhood

This illustrious Swami Vivekananda was born as child Narendranath in the famous Dutta family of Simla in the northern part of Calcutta on

Monday, the 12th January, 1863 (just a few minutes before sunrise on the 7th day of the new moon in the month of Pous—the day of *Makara Sankranti*—a great religious festival of the Hindus). His ancestors were noted for their liberal education and high standard of culture, unbounded charity and catholicity of outlook. His grandfather Durgacharan Dutta who was well versed in Persian and Sanskrit, renounced the world and took to the life of a monk at the age of twenty-five immediately after the birth of his son Viswanath Dutta. The latter endowed with the sterling qualities of head and heart and possessing the traits and traditions of the family soon grew up to manhood and like his father devoted himself to the study of Persian. Moreover, he got himself educated in English schools and colleges and eventually became a prominent attorney-at-law in the High Court of Calcutta. He had a princely income in his legal profession but, due to his large-hearted sympathy for the afflicted and indiscriminate charity, he spent his ample earning without any thought of the morrow and as a result he could hardly store up and leave behind, till the end, any fortune for his family.

Viswanath was wedded to a lady Bhubaneswari by name, who was adorned with similar exemplary virtues. Her austere habits, dignity of conduct, devotional frame of mind, love for the poor and the helpless, sense of discipline and, above all, her superb capacity for the management of domestic affairs made her an ideal mistress of the house-hold. She developed from her tender age a spirit of calm resignation to God and took special interest in the study of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*—the store-house of India's spiritual culture which she passed on to her children as a valued heritage for building up their life and character. It was no wonder that Narendranath—the future Swami Vivekananda, born of these noble parents and inheriting such glorious traditions, would blossom forth in after years as one of the most powerful personalities destined to usher in an age of fresh glory for India and a new order of things for the world outside.

From his very childhood Narendranath began to show unmistakable signs of his future greatness. The indomitable spiritual power with which he was ushered into life, struggled for expression even in his tender age in a variety of ways. Sometimes he would grow so restless that two nurses had

to be engaged to keep him under control. He was moreover a great tease. Nettled at his wild pranks and naughtiness, when his sisters chased him, he would quickly take shelter in an open drain full of garbage and begin to grin and grimace at them with impunity as he knew that they would not venture to that filthy spot. Narendranath, whose spiritual power was destined in after years to move the world, felt the spirit of greatness within him even at this early age and would not allow himself to be dominated by anybody. In his favourite game of the "King and the Court", he would be the King and others his subordinates. He would hold a Durbar with all regal paraphernalia and dispense justice with royal dignity. The coachman donning a turban on the head and flourishing a whip in the hand was to Naren an ideal hero and he aspired in his childhood to become a groom so as to enjoy such a commanding position.

We notice also a glimpse of his spiritual life at this period. When he went to bed at night, he used to visualize an effulgent light between his eyebrows, which waxed bigger and bigger till at last it covered his whole body and gradually soothed him into deep sleep. Sometimes, he would play at meditation along with his friends and become so much absorbed in it that he lost all outward consciousness. Once, so deep was his meditation that he could not feel even the presence of a deadly cobra that neared him with its expanded hood, while his comrades ran helter-skelter to a safer distance out of fear, shouting danger to Narendranath. When subsequently interrogated by the mother why he did not move from his seat in the face of such an imminent peril, he calmly replied that he did not know a jot and tittle of what happened outside as he was inwardly experiencing an ineffable joy in his meditation.

Naren had a particular fascination for itinerant monks. The very sight of a *sadhu* at the door evoked in him an instinctive feeling of kinship with him. It threw him into such an ecstasy of delight that he would instantly give the monk, as an offering, whatever he could find near at hand in the room. To prevent this reckless charity and wastage, the mother Bhubaneswari had to lock up Naren whenever any *sadhu* was seen coming to the house with a begging bowl in hand.

Naren's education began at the knee of his mother from whom he learnt

the Bengali alphabet and the first English words. His boyish imagination very often travelled back to the hallowed days of the epic past, when he listened with rapt attention to the romantic tales of the *Ramayana* as told by the mother, and he became so much thrilled to hear these soul-stirring episodes that he began to offer worship to Sita-Rama and earnestly longed to have a vision of the devout Hanuman. Then again, the all-renouncing Shiva captivated his heart and became the object of his unbounded love and adoration. So prodigious was also his retentive power that he learnt by heart lengthy passages of the great epics, simply by hearing, and mastered the whole of the *Mugdhabodha*—a Sanskrit Grammar—even at the age of seven. These extraordinary powers and the inborn religious instinct so spontaneously manifested in a sparkling variety of forms even in childhood, gave faint but sure indications of what a great spiritual destiny was in store for him in future.

Boyhood and Early Education

As years rolled on, Viswanath became anxious to see his son properly educated in a good English school. With this end in view, he got Naren admitted in 1870 to the Metropolitan Institution founded by Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. But such a rigid routine life did hardly fit in with Naren's restless temperament. Even during class hours, he would move to and fro and entertain his class-mates with interesting stories, the while he listened to the lesson with his inborn capacity to double the mind. Sometimes he would convert the class room into a play-ground. It thus became a hard job for the teachers to tackle such an exceptionally meritorious but turbulent student.

His inventive genius led him to devise various ways and means one after the other to canalize his cooped up exuberant energy. To beguile himself and others he would start an amateur theatrical party and hold dramatic performances in the worship-hall of the house with the help of his friends. When carried to excess, they were abruptly stopped by the parents, and Naren immediately improvised a gymnasium in the spacious courtyard. But he had to bundle up things at the instance of his elders when one of his cousins sustained a fracture of his arm. Nothing discouraged or daunted,

he joined the gymnasium of his neighbour and soon interested himself in fencing, lathi-play, wrestling, rowing and other manly sports likely to help build his physique. There was another avenue to get rid of his superfluous energy. He would very often climb the tree of a neighbour's garden, swing violently from a branch with his head thrown downward, somersault to the ground and thus disturb the peace of the locality. The half-blind grandfather of the house, to scare away Naren and his group of friends, told them with all seriousness that the tree was haunted by a hobgoblin (a *Brahmadaitya*) and it would break the necks of those who would not desist from these acrobatics in the garden. The companions of Naren scented danger and asked him not to repeat it in future. But the shrewd Naren saw through the whole game and told his affrighted friends that his neck would have been long off, had there been even an iota of truth in the ghost-story of the grand-dad. Referring to such superstitious ideas, Narendranath (as Swami Vivekananda) used to say to others, "Do not believe a thing because another has said it is so. Find out the truth for yourself. That is realisation."

This precocious boy exhibited exceptional intelligence and presence of mind in his younger days under most trying circumstances and earned the love and admiration of his associates. Once a British man-of-war 'the Syrapis' anchored at the Calcutta Port during the visit of the late Emperor Edward VII, the then Prince of Wales, and, like many others, Naren with a group of friends wanted to see the ship for which a formal permission from an English official was necessary. Naren was too young and as such was refused permission by the porter to enter the officer's room in the upper storey. Thus baffled, he quickly went round and discovered a staircase in the rear whereby he stealthily went up to the first floor and took his stand in the line with others with his application in hand. When his turn came in the queue, it was duly signed by the officer without any question. While going out, Naren was asked by the outwitted door-keeper how he could enter the room. Naren smilingly said to the amazed porter, "Oh, I am a magician".

On another occasion, he and his friends hired a country boat for going to the Nawab's Zoological Garden at Metiabruz, a suburb of south Calcutta. While returning, one of his friends suddenly fell sick and vomited. The

boatmen flew into a rage and threatened the boys with dire consequences if they did not immediately clean up the boat. Seeing the situation very precarious, the boy Naren jumped ashore and ran up to the two British soldiers who were passing that way and in broken English narrated their woeful plight. The handsome look of the boy arrested their attention and, realizing the situation, they hurried to the spot and immediately ordered the boatmen to release the boys on pain of severe punishment. Terrified at the sight of the soldiers, the boatmen set the boys free and instantly disappeared from the scene. Needless to point out that the affair would have taken a very ugly turn but for the presence of mind of the sharp-witted Narendranath.

Another side of the character of Narendranath began to reveal itself as he advanced in years. Exceptionally gifted, Naren gave himself up to intellectual pursuits for the acquisition of knowledge in the various branches of study with steadfast zeal and soon developed a critical judgment and argumentative power which were the despair of many at this age. Besides, he was a staunch votary of truth and from his boyhood shunned like venom all the evil ways of life. Though he was outwardly a little stern and rough, his heart was full of the milk of human kindness and he would be the first to rush to the aid of any person found involved in danger or difficulty. Moreover, his inborn spiritual instinct prompted him to spend more time from now in meditation at night and as a result he was occasionally blessed with wonderful visions.

Naren felt a natural kinship with Nature, the bewitching beauties—the various sights and sounds of which very often awakened in him deep spiritual emotions and plunged him into trance. In 1877, when Naren was reading in the third class, his father went to Raipur in the Central Provinces, instructing the family to proceed to that place later under the guidance of his son Naren. It so happened that the party had to traverse a long distance for days together by bullock carts through dense jungles and over high hills. Naren was extremely delighted to enjoy the freedom of the open in the course of his long trek through the forest. The solemn silence of the surroundings, the melodious warblings of birds of variegated colours, the soft beauty of the green foliage of trees and creepers begemmed with sweet-

scented flowers, the luxuriant verdure hiding the ugliness of the earth underneath—all combined to conjure up before the fervid imagination of the boy a realm of heavenly bliss rarely to be met with in this world of tears. One day, while passing through the Vindhya Hills where the lofty peaks shot up high overhead on either side, Naren all on a sudden noticed a vastly expanded bee-hive hanging with its millions of busy and buzzing inmates in a deep cleft in one of the hills. The very sight of such a big hive which was the product of centuries of indefatigable labour of these untiring and industrious battalions of bees reminded him of the immensity of the universe and the vastness of the power of the Almighty Creator and threw him instantly into a trance. So deep it was that he remained unconscious on the bullock cart for hours together. When he regained normal consciousness, he found that a long distance had been covered by this time. This was the first instance when his powerful imagination switched him off from the outer world into the realm of the Unknown and kept him completely oblivious of what happened outside for such a long period.

There being no school at the time in Raipur, Naren was now altogether free from the obligation of learning the routine-lessons of a class. He thus got a golden opportunity to utilize this leisure in the study of standard books on different subjects. His father Viswanath also gave the boy complete freedom in this regard so that he might develop according to his own line of growth. Moreover, to stimulate the boy's intellectual curiosity and intensify his eagerness to enrich the stock of knowledge, he used to hold long discussions with him upon difficult topics which required precision and depth of thought. In this way, Naren's intellectual horizon was greatly widened under the loving guidance of his learned father. Thus Narendranath had finished a good number of important books on history and mastered many standard works of the English and Bengali literature by the time he completed his school career.

On their return to Calcutta in 1879, Naren was re-admitted to the school. An intellectual prodigy and a born genius, Narendranath made up the loss very quickly and passed the Entrance Examination at the age of sixteen in the first division—a unique distinction attained by him alone in that Institution for which he was rewarded with a watch by his father.

Collegiate Education

Narendranath was now sixteen. He had grown up by that time to be a sturdy young man of great intellectual acumen and strong moral principles. His collegiate education began at the Presidency College, Calcutta, where he studied First Arts for one year. Subsequently, he got himself admitted to the Scottish Churches College and passed the F.A. Examination in 1881 in the second division. It is interesting to note that it was during this period that Narendranath heard for the first time about his future Master Sri Ramakrishna from the then Principal William Hastie. The Principal, in the course of his lecture on Wordsworth's *Excursion*, tried to explain how the celebrated English poet fell into deep trance, while contemplating the beauties of Nature ; but when the young students could not ascend to the apprehension of this subtle experience of the poet, he referred to Sri Ramakrishna, the great saint of Dakshineswar, whom he had known to be the only person who had an experience of that blessed state of mind. He asked the boys to see the sage and understand for themselves what was implied by that mystic trance.

In his college days, Naren developed an inordinate tendency to go through standard books on a variety of subjects, and by the time he passed the B.A. Examination, he had acquired a thorough grasp of the masterpieces of Western Logic and Philosophy and the histories of the different nations of Europe. Principal William Hastie was so much impressed by the sterling parts and the intellectual daring of Naren that he once remarked to the other alumni, "Naren is really a genius. I have travelled far and wide, but I have never yet come across a lad of his talents and possibilities, even in German Universities, amongst philosophical students. He is bound to make a mark in life".¹ The prophecy of this learned teacher about his talented student was more than justified by the unique position to which his inborn spiritual genius elected him in the course of a few years.

As days rolled on, Narendranath's intimate acquaintance with the startling contributions of the scientists of the West and the rationalistic thoughts and ideas of John Stuart Mill, Hume, Descartes, Darwin, Herbert Spencer and such other free thinkers and writers of the Occident began to

demolish his long-cherished pet ideas and sentiments, dealt heavy blows at his deep-seated faith in the Hindu gods and goddesses, and raised such a tumult of doubt in his mind that he grew restless and became almost a sceptic. But his innate spiritual nature did not allow him to remain satisfied with that state of mind. It battled incessantly against all these alluring nihilistic thoughts and more often than not asserted itself, even in the midst of these harassing doubts and agonizing mental struggles, to get a glimpse of the Unknown in whose existence he did never lose faith. For, a person who was born to solve the manifold problems of life and thereby to dispense spiritual pabulum to the myriads of hungering souls, cannot be so easily swamped by the spate of these materialistic ideas. Narendranath's lacerated heart now cried for a healing balm and it came, through divine dispensation, at this critical hour, from an unexpected quarter.

It has already been hinted at the outset that India was wading through a bewildering variety of cultural ideals from the close of the 18th century right up to the middle of the 19th due to the influx of atheistic and materialistic ideas of the West into the realm of Indian thought. But a race with its hoary spiritual traditions and rich cultural heritage can hardly be conquered by an exotic civilization so easily. India's instinct of self-preservation woke up to meet this challenge of the West and some socio-religious movements came into existence and stood as a bulwark for the time being against the advancing tide of alien thought and culture. The first to take the field was the Brahma-Sabha, later called the Brahmo Samaj, started in 1828 A.D. by Raja Rammohan Roy, the great patriot and reformer of modern India. The next to follow was the Arya Samaj launched in 1875 in Bombay by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, a thundering polemic who was aggressively hostile to Islam and Christianity. Simultaneously with the inauguration of the Arya-Samaj, another reforming Body named Theosophical Society was started in 1875 by Madame Blavatsky (a Russian lady). Though it had its origin in New York, its tenets were adapted to the needs and requirements of the Indian people and subsequently introduced into this country. Each of these reform movements stressed some elements of Hindu faith and tried to meet the blind dogmatists on the one hand and the ultra-rationalists on the other in its own peculiar way and succeeded

partially in stemming the tide of westernization and reviving to a certain extent the dormant spiritual consciousness of the Indians.

However, of these three movements, the Brahmo Samaj that protested against certain forms and tenets of the orthodox Hinduism such as polytheism, image worship, Divine Incarnation and the need of a *guru*, on the religious side, and advocated the equality of man and the education and emancipation of women and the abolition of caste, on the social side, made a strong appeal to the imagination of young Bengal, and Naren who was greatly captivated by the oratorical talents, personal magnetism, sincerity of feeling and the integrity of character of Keshab Chandra Sen, the then leader of the Brahmo Samaj, looked upon this society as the ideal institution for the solution of life's problems, individual and collective, and identified himself with it for the time being. Thus he regularly began to attend prayers and became a staunch camp-follower of Keshab Chandra. But this kind of life bereft of that spiritual dash and depth and also of the spirit of renunciation that were absolutely necessary for a deeper plunge into the core of Reality could not hold him fast for long to that reformist institution, however intellectual its atmosphere might be, and he naturally sought for some other avenues to get nearer to the truth, the realization of which now became the burning passion of his life.

While Naren was in this unsettled state of mind, two alluring ideals presented themselves simultaneously to him. Sometimes he felt that he possessed tremendous power and capacity to rise to the pinnacle of mundane glory if he took to the life of a house-holder ; but at the same time he became charmed by the glowing picture of an all-renouncing monk free from the tentacles of all worldly bondages, and roaming with a begging bowl in hand without any thought of the morrow, and he instinctively felt that he possessed the requisite spiritual fire to embrace the lofty monastic ideal of renunciation and poverty. In this conflict of ideals, Naren's genuine spiritual impulse eventually triumphed and opened unto him the real path he should follow for the fulfilment of his noble aspiration.

In his earnest longing to realize the truth he once went to Maharshi Devendranath Tagore who was regarded by many at the time as highly advanced in matters spiritual. With high hopes swelling in the heart, Naren

posed the query to the Maharshi with all sincerity, "Sir, have you seen God?" But no answer in the affirmative came from that great personage. Sorely disappointed, Narendranath came away and began to approach the leaders of different religious orders with the very same question, but got no satisfactory solution in this regard. At this moment of bewilderment, he remembered to have seen Sri Ramakrishna, the sage of Dakshineswar, once in the house of his neighbour Sri Surendranath Mitra in November 1881, where he had been invited to sing. The motherly love and care with which the great saint Sri Ramakrishna had made affectionate enquiries about him on that occasion and asked him to visit Dakshineswar now rushed to his memory and Naren decided at this hour of mental trouble and confusion to see him soon for a positive reply to his searching query.

Sri Ramakrishna at the Temple Garden of Dakshineswar

Before we proceed to deal with the historic meeting of the two mighty souls in the serene atmosphere of the temple-garden of Dakshineswar, we would do well to remember that the three reformist movements referred to above, however well intentioned, were extremely sectional in their character. They failed to grasp the grand chord of unity running through the colourful multiplicity of the creeds of Hinduism, and characterized, through ignorance, its various essential aspects as rank superstitions. Their efforts to purge the Hindu faith of all that appeared to them redundant could not, therefore, capture the imagination of the orthodox school of thought and produce the desired result.

It cannot, however, be gainsaid that the Hindu faith, notwithstanding its universality, needed readjustment to cleanse its musty chambers scored with the accumulated outworn usages and customs as also with the meaningless inhibitions of centuries. But the orthodox section of the Hindu society plodded on listlessly without paying much heed to the aggressive march of foreign thoughts. They stuck fast to their age-old beliefs and refused to adjust themselves according to the intellectual demands of the time. This stiff-necked attitude of the conservative masses proved a stumbling block in the regeneration of the Hindu religion and culture. There

was, therefore, a dire necessity for the growth of a movement that would be able not only to respond to the time-forces but also to harmonize the fundamental instincts of India's social organism, i.e. the instinct of conservatism and that of expansion, for a complete renaissance of the Hindu faith. This was fulfilled in the spiritual personality of Sri Ramakrishna who came to focus the attention of the self-forgetful Indians on the treasures of their indigenous culture which bore in it the strength and vitality for infinite expansion and world conquest.

Sri Ramakrishna was born on the soil of Bengal on the 18th of February, 1836, in an orthodox Brahmin family of Kamarpukur in the district of Hooghly. His father Kshudiram Chattopadhyay and mother Chandrá Devi were held in high reverence by the villagers for their righteousness, dignity of character, devotion to gods and goddesses, and large-hearted sympathy for the poor and the helpless. Gadadhar, for that was the name of the child, bore all the noble traits of his devout parents. From his early age Gadadhar developed a contemplative habit and a deep regard for saints and sages. He sometimes passed into ecstatic trances at the sight of a charming phenomenon of Nature, or while singing devotional songs or while playing the role of Shiva in a village *yatra* performance. Secular education was repugnant to the boy for he wanted to acquire that wisdom which would help him to realize God and thereby to transcend the miseries of the world. After the death of Kshudiram, Ramakumar, the eldest brother of Gadadhar, took him to his Sanskrit *Tol* at Jhamapukur in Calcutta where both the brothers managed with great difficulty to earn some money to meet the bare needs of the family.

About this time Rani Rashmani, a well-to-do pious and influential Hindu lady of Calcutta, founded a Kali Temple at Dakshineswar about four miles to the north of the city. Ramakumar who was well-known and respected in the locality for his profound scholarship and liberal ideas, was appointed a priest at the temple of Goddess Kali. Gadadhar also followed his elder brother and began to live with him in the temple-garden which was altogether free from the din and bustle of the town life. He was elated with joy to get such a golden opportunity to lead a life of contemplation in that hallowed and sequestered place by the side of the holy Ganges. The

atmosphere of intense peace and blessedness, the living presence of the Divine Mother and the sanctity of the surroundings awakened in him a deep religious emotion for the realization of God and soon brought about a phenomenal change in his nature. After the demise of his elder brother, Gadadhar (whom we shall now call by the name of Sri Ramakrishna) was appointed to the post of the priest at the Kali Temple. The transitoriness of the worldly things did never impinge on his soul so deeply as it did at this time. For twelve long years his God-intoxicated mind remained completely dead to the outside world as a great religious tornado raged within him during this long period of *sádhaná*. His mind and body knew no rest till his mad spiritual quest was crowned with the vision of the Supreme Reality. He reached a plane of spiritual consciousness wherefrom he could view with love and sympathy all forms of religious beliefs extant in the world. He explored for humanity all the approaches to the realm of eternal wisdom; for there was no religious faith that he did not practise and no truth that he did not realize in the course of his *sádhaná*. He verified in his life that, "The three great orders of metaphysical thought—dualism, modified monism and absolute monism—are stages on the way to the Supreme Truth. They are not contradictory, but rather when added the one to the other are complementary". The various paths—*jñána*, *karma*, *bhakti* and *yoga*,—all lead to the same goal, if followed with steady zeal and application, and no colour, caste, creed or sex is any the least bar to the sacred temple of realization².

This profound realization of Sri Ramakrishna did not remain cooped up within the four walls of the temple-garden. Like bees swarming to suck honey from fully blossomed flowers, seekers after Truth began to flock in large numbers to this great Prophet of Dakshineswar to get their spiritual thirst satisfied. Well-known *Vaishnava* and *Tántrika sádhakas*, itinerant monks of different religious denominations, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, Christians, Muhammedans, Sikhs, great literary geniuses and philosophical thinkers, theologians and professors, the illustrious leaders of the Brahmo Samaj including Keshab Chandra Sen, Pratap Chandra Majumdar, Vijaykrishna Goswami and others gradually came into intimate contact with this magnetic personality and became deeply impressed by his

universal teachings and catholic outlook. But Sri Ramakrishna's heart was not satisfied with his association and talks with these people, however great they were in their respective spheres. He wanted a heroic band of immaculate souls who, imbued with the lofty spirit of renunciation and self-sacrifice, would dedicate themselves whole-heartedly to the service of humanity at large. So strong was his yearning for their advent that he used very often to go to the roof of the building in the garden and cry out at the top of his voice in the agony of his heart, "Oh, where are you? I cannot bear to live without you". He shed bitter tears in his ardent longing to meet these unsophisticated children of the Divine Mother, who would bear the Cross manfully and become real instruments for the propagation of his message in the world. This earnest prayer of the Master that welled up from the inmost core of his being did not go in vain. Beckoned as it were by Providence, sincere devotees began to cluster round him one by one, and Narendranath, the leader of this brilliant galaxy of immaculate souls who were to become later monks of the Order of Sri Ramakrishna, one day went to Dakshineswar in response to the divine call to meet his future *guru* who was awaiting, with a breathless thrill of expectancy, the arrival of his spiritual child in the serene peace of this holy place for the fulfilment of his own mission on earth.

Meeting of Master-minds

The union of these two master-minds that were almost poles asunder in points of education and culture, religious beliefs, and ideologies, was of great historical significance. It was like the meeting of the two streams of thought coming from two opposite directions and forming into a confluence. In other words, it symbolized a bold challenge of the scientific West to the spiritual idealism of the East. This fact has been beautifully portrayed in the following few lines in the *Life of Swami Vivekananda*,³ "Sri Ramakrishna was the heart of old India, with its spiritual perspective, its asceticism and its realizations,—the India of the Upanishads. Naren came to him with all the doubts and scepticism of the modern age, unwilling to accept even the highest truths of religion without verification, yet

with a burning zeal for the truth raging within him... The result of the contact of these two great personalities, Sri Ramakrishna and Narendranath, was the Swami Vivekananda who was to become the heart of a New India with the ancient spiritual perspective heightened, widened and strengthened to include modern learning; old ideas assimilating the new. The intense activity of the West to be combined with the deep meditation of the East. Asceticism and retirement were to be supplemented by work and service to others. From the merging of these two currents came Neo-Hinduism, the faith of a glorious Tomorrow, in which all should be fulfilment and nothing denial."

Narendranath, accompanied by some of his friends, came one day in a carriage to Dakshineswar and entered the room of Sri Ramakrishna by the western door. At the very sight, Sri Ramakrishna recognized Naren to be the person who was destined to carry his message to the world. He moreover recalled his previous beatific vision in the course of which he saw seated in the transcendental realm seven *rishis* lost in profound meditation and surpassing not only men but even gods in knowledge and holiness, in renunciation and love. That Narendranath was one of these *rishis*, who signified his desire to come down to the earth to help fulfil his divine mission in the world, flashed before him with all vividness, and Sri Ramakrishna was overwhelmed with an uncontrollable emotion to see the same old sage standing before him in the form of Narendranath at Dakshineswar. Amidst sobs and with tears of joy rolling down his cheeks, Sri Ramakrishna addressed him most tenderly, saying, "Ah, you come so late! How could you be so unkind as to keep me waiting so long! My ears are well nigh burnt in listening to the profane talks of worldly people. Oh, how I yearn to unburden my mind to one who can appreciate my innermost experience". Thereafter he stood before him with folded hands and began to address him, "Lord, I know you are that ancient sage, Nara—the Incarnation of Narayana—born on earth to remove the miseries of mankind". Narendranath was thunderstruck to hear these strange and apparently irrelevant words from Sri Ramakrishna to whom he had come to get a proper solution of the most critical problem of his life. Nothing annoyed or puzzled, Naren boldly put his long-cherished question: "Have

you seen God, Sir"? "Yes, I see Him just as I see you, only in a much intenser sense. God can be realized ; one can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you. But who cares to do so? People shed torrents of tears for their wife and children, for wealth or property, but who does so for the sake of God? If one weeps sincerely for Him, He surely manifests Himself." Narendranath was greatly impressed by what Sri Ramakrishna had told him with all sincerity and candidness of a child, though his strange words and queer behaviour made him a little suspicious of the normalcy of his mental condition. He was however satisfied that he had after all met a man who could asseverate with the certitude of conviction of a seer that he had realized God and others could also be blessed with the vision of the Supreme Truth if they followed suit. Narendranath took leave of the Master after giving him the assurance that he would come to see him again very soon.

Narendranath's second visit was more remarkable for a much stranger experience which is described in his own words as follows: "I found him (Sri Ramakrishna) sitting alone on the small bedstead. He was glad to see me and calling me affectionately to his side, made me sit beside him on his bed. . . . But in the twinkling of an eye he placed his right foot on my body. The touch at once gave rise to a novel experience within me. With my eyes open, I saw that the walls, and everything in the room, whirled rapidly and vanished into naught and the whole universe together with my individuality was about to merge in an all-encompassing Void! I was terribly frightened, and I thought that I was facing death, for the loss of individuality meant nothing short of that. Unable to control myself I cried out, 'What is it that you are doing to me? I have my parents at home!' He laughed aloud at this and stroking my chest said, 'All right, let it rest now. Everything will come in time!' The wonder of it was that no sooner had he said this than that strange experience of mine vanished. I was myself again and found everything within and without the room as it had been before".

Was it mesmerism or hypnotism?—Naren asked himself. He could not however persuade himself to believe that it was so. For, how could an unlettered *fakir* exercise such an overmastering influence upon the strong and resolute mind of a person of his own intellectual calibre? All the same,

he could not deny Sri Ramakrishna's superhuman mental force that acted so powerfully on him with the suddenness of an electric flash. It thus became a baffling mystery to Naren that a person could smash to pieces a strong mind like his in a trice and at the same time treat him with uncommon love and kindness. Rationalist Narendranath was really in a quandary.

Naren did not fare better even on the occasion of his third visit which occurred only a few days later. Immediately after his arrival, he was taken by the Master to the adjacent garden of Jadunath Mallik and made to sit by his side. Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna touched Naren who, in spite of all precautions to resist the will of this God-intoxicated man, lost all outward consciousness. The Master learned during this period Naren's antecedents and the mission he would fulfil in this world. Narendranath was now fully convinced that a tremendous spiritual force was working through Sri Ramakrishna. The selfless love and affection bestowed on him and the feeling of blessedness that came upon him by his association with this saint of Dakshineswar drew him closer and closer to the Master from day to day and his doubt about Sri Ramakrishna's mental soundness soon yielded to a feeling of profound respect for him, though it took a little more time for him to accept him as his *guru* once for all in matters spiritual.

A Saint in the Making

The relation between Sri Ramakrishna and Narendranath forms one of the most thrilling episodes in the life-history of this twin personality, as it brings into bold but graceful relief the formative influence of the Master in making Narendranath a full-fledged Swami Vivekananda for the service of humanity. The love of the Master for Naren knew no bounds. It flowed as a freshet uncontaminated by the least tinge of dirt of human or personal sentiment. The Master's emotion of divine love welled up from within in foamy freshness even at the very sight of Naren. His prolonged absence from Dakshineswar would render him so disconsolate that he would sometimes burst into tears and often pass sleepless nights, being unable to bear the pangs of separation.

Sri Ramakrishna was also all praise for Naren for his boldness, spirit of self-reliance, manliness, single-minded devotion to truth and purity of character. He did not hesitate to speak highly of Naren even before others. One day Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his room, surrounded by Sri Keshab Chandra Sen, Vijaykrishna Goswami and other illustrious leaders of the Brahmo Samaj. The Master first glanced at the Brahmo leaders and then at Naren who was also present there. After their departure Sri Ramakrishna began to say to his devotees, "Well, if Keshab is possessed of one mark of greatness which has made him famous, Naren has eighteen such marks. In Keshab and Vijay, I saw the light of knowledge burning like a candle-flame, but in Narendra it was like a blazing sun, dispelling the last vestige of ignorance and delusion". Naren felt abashed and strongly remonstrated. Moreover he politely requested the Master not to repeat such remarks in future in the presence of others. The Master said, "I cannot help it. Do you think those were my words? The Divine Mother showed me certain things which I simply repeated. And she never reveals to me anything but truth." Needless to add that this firm conviction of Sri Ramakrishna about Naren's future greatness and his unfailing love and unstinted admiration for him gave him perennial inspiration and indomitable strength especially in later years when he plunged headlong into the whirlpool of activity to fulfil the behest of the great Teacher.

But notwithstanding the Master's intense love and attraction for Naren, the latter was very critical of the spiritual visions of Sri Ramakrishna, which he occasionally confided to Naren and other intimate devotees with the simplicity of a child. Endowed with a rationalistic frame of mind, Naren was not the person to accept anything as gospel truth without testing it in the crucible of his own reason. For, he could not even then realize that intuitive perception which was a transcendental one, stood far beyond the scope of dry intellectualism and was not to be judged in the light of the jugglery of ratiocination. Sri Ramakrishna who had a great admiration for Naren's freedom of thought was inwardly very glad to see this critical attitude in him and gave him ample latitude to develop in his own way through this intellectual strain and struggle which, he firmly believed,

would eventually lead this saint-in-the-making to the apogee of spiritual glory.

Sri Ramakrishna's process of training Naren completely differed from what he followed in the case of others. For he knew that Naren belonged to a special category, intellectually, temperamentally and spiritually and his path of evolution was that of *Jnana* (knowledge), and as such he prescribed quite a separate specific for the manifestation of his inborn spiritual genius. Sri Ramakrishna therefore talked very often on *Advaita* philosophy with him trying at the same time to bring home to him the identity of the individual soul with *Brahman*. An interesting incident occurred in this connection. One day Naren listened with rapt attention to Sri Ramakrishna's dissertation on the ultimate finding of the *Vedanta* philosophy that everything from the highest to the minutest atom of the universe was but the embodiment of the same *Brahman*, difference being only in names and forms. But Narendranath failing to appreciate it, went to the room of Pratap Chandra Hazra, a dry dialectician, and both began to twit this experience of the Master as the product of a heated brain. Hearing the laughter of Naren, Sri Ramakrishna came out and smilingly said, "Hallo! what are you talking about?" With these words, he touched Naren and plunged into *Samadhi*. The magic touch of the Master brought about a quick change over his mind. Instantaneously he felt that there was nothing but God in the universe! Even when he returned home the very same idea persisted with all vividness. This state of intoxication went on continuously for some days and his mother got alarmed at the sight of the dazed and bewildered condition of her son. However, when he came down to the normal plane of consciousness, he realized that he must have got a glimpse of the *Advaita Vedanta*. About this Narendranath said later on: "Then it struck me that the words of the scriptures were not false. Thenceforth I could not deny the conclusions of the *Advaita* philosophy." This incident, though apparently trifling and accidental, increased Naren's regard for Sri Ramakrishna thousandfold, and he began to look upon the Master as the highest ideal of spirituality. Thus "little by little Naren was led from doubt to beatitude, from darkness to light, from anguish of mind to the certainty of bliss,

from the seething vortex of the world to the grand expanse of universal oneness."⁴

In the Midst of Domestic Troubles

Time and tide tarry for none. So, days rolled on unnoticed as Narendranath's increasing interest in study and meditation swept him away from the whiz and whirr of the work-a-day world for the time being into the silence of his own lonely closet. But even there he was assailed by many unwanted thoughts and was not allowed to enjoy the calm which he needed and sought for a peaceful pursuit of his studies and contemplation. His parents and other relatives began to worry the youthful Naren with pressing proposals of marriage from well-to-do aristocratic families. But, as expected, the spiritually gifted Naren turned down such requests for marriage with his characteristic abhorrence for a life of sense-enjoyment. When these reports about marriage reached the ears of Sri Ramakrishna, he got alarmed. With tears in his eyes, he prayed to the Divine Mother to save his dear Naren from being entangled in the meshes of a marital life, for Naren was meant for a higher avocation in this world. Wonder of wonders! Henceforth whenever such a nuptial arrangement was about to be consummated, some sort of unavoidable impediment stood in the way of its fulfilment!

But a far more trying ordeal now awaited Naren. A few days after the B.A. examination, his father, Viswanath, suddenly died of heart-disease and the whole family was plunged into dire financial distress. As already stated, Viswanath was a spendthrift and as such he spent more than he earned. Immediately after his demise it was discovered that the family was over head and ears in debt. The creditors knocked at the door; the erstwhile friends turned enemies, and the nearest relatives, taking advantage of this helpless condition, filed a suit to oust them all from the house. Nothing daunted, Naren fought manfully, and ultimately triumphed in the litigation in which he had to get himself involved in spite of himself under circumstances over which he had no control.

Narendranath passed the B.A. Examination and began to study law.

But starvation soon stared the family in the face. Notwithstanding his best efforts, he was not able to secure any employment anywhere in the city to earn his living. What could be more tragic and painful than to see the future world-renowned Swami Vivekananda roam as a pauper in the streets of Calcutta in the prime of his life from door to door in search of a job to save his distressed family from the icy hand of starvation and death? To fill the cup of misery, a doubt suddenly crept into his storm-tossed mind as to the very existence of Godhead and His even-handed justice and grace. At this hour of mental strife and confusion, one evening, Narendranath, jaded and tired after a whole day's fast and walk, sank down on the outer plinth of a house on the road-side and became unconscious for a time through sheer weariness. All on a sudden, the covering of his soul was removed and he inwardly felt the living presence of a Blissful Providence and found a rational explanation of the co-existence of weal and woe, light and darkness, affluence and poverty in this realm of conflicts and contradictions. Refreshed and rejuvenated with an accession of mental strength and peace due to this wonderful revelation, Naren stood up and came back to his house unnoticed almost at the close of the night.

A consciousness soon dawned on him that he was not born to follow the common rut of a householder's life in this world ; that a higher spiritual destiny was in store for him and he must tear himself away from all domestic ties and take to the life of a monk. No sooner did this idea flash in his mind than he got himself ready for carrying it into action. But before the final jump, he wanted to get the blessings of the Master and went to meet him in the house of a devotee in Calcutta where he had come by chance on that day. Sri Ramakrishna, with his deep spiritual insight, immediately divined the inner intention of his beloved disciple and took him that very day to Dakshineswar where he was made to stay for the night. With extreme tenderness and tears in his eyes, Sri Ramakrishna asked Naren not to renounce the world immediately as the time was not yet ripe for such a decisive step. Overpowered with the Master's emotional appeal, Narendranath nodded assent to his wishes and bided the time for the fulfilment of his cherished desire.

But the acute financial want of the family continued to harass him as

before and it was crystal clear to him that unless this problem was solved satisfactorily, his dream of striking into the path of monastic life would never become an actuality. So he left no stone unturned from now to find out a suitable avenue for effectively grappling with this distressing situation. No doubt he earned some money by working hard in an attorney's office and also by translating books ; but this did not fetch a permanent income to cover the ever-increasing expenses of his family. Finding no way out, Naren besought Sri Ramakrishna to pray for him to the Divine Mother to solve his pecuniary difficulties. Being hard pressed by Naren, Sri Ramakrishna told him that the Divine Mother would grant him whatever he wanted if he himself prayed to Her on that auspicious day. Armed with this belief, Naren slowly proceeded to the temple in the silence of the night in a state of divine intoxication. But the moment he stood in front of the Goddess Kali—the Perennial Spring of Infinite Love and Beauty—he totally forgot all about his sordid material needs and prostrating himself before Her, prayed only for knowledge and devotion, renunciation and love. When the Master came to know from Naren, on his return, what he had asked for, he, though inwardly much pleased, scolded him for this silly forgetfulness. Two other consecutive attempts of Naren in this regard ended with no better results ; because, on every occasion, a sudden upsurge of lofty spiritual emotion at the sight of the benign Mother did not allow him to crave for anything else than supreme love and devotion and the vision of the Blissful Mother. Realizing that it was all his Master's play, Naren would not allow Sri Ramakrishna to ignore his request and ultimately elicited from him the benediction that the members of his (Naren's) family would never be in want of plain food and raiment. Referring to these incidents, Narendranath often said afterwards, "It was his unflinching trust and love for me that bound me to him for ever. He alone knew how to love another. Worldly people only make a show of love for selfish ends."

Training and Transformation

Sri Ramakrishna's presence in the serene atmosphere of Dakshineswar was a source of perennial inspiration—a compelling stimulus to enter into

the realm of sublime emotion. It offered a unique opportunity for Narendranath and other young disciples of the Master to mould their lives in the divine image of their spiritual preceptor. His beatific visions, ecstatic trances, inspiring utterances, soul-enthraling devotional songs and, above all, his unprecedented spirit of renunciation served to kindle in their unsophisticated souls a burning desire to be in constant communion with God. Sri Ramakrishna, like a master-physician, diagnosed the needs and requirements of the moral and spiritual health of every aspirant and administered the appropriate anodyne to cure him of his malaise. Thus his spiritual ministration varied according to the individual mental make-up of the aspirants who clustered round his magnetic personality for guidance in matters spiritual. Referring to the peculiarity of the Master's training, Narendranath used to say, "It is impossible to give others even an idea of the ineffable joy we derived from the presence of the Master. . . . As the master-athlete proceeds with great caution and restraint with the beginner, now overpowering him in the strength with great difficulty, as it were, and again owning defeat at his hands to strengthen his spirit of self-reliance, in exactly the same manner did Sri Ramakrishna treat us. Realizing that in all exists the *Atman* which is the source of infinite strength, in every individual, pigmy though he might be, he was able to see the potential giant. He could clearly discern the latent spiritual power which would, in the fulness of time, manifest itself. Holding that bright picture before us he would speak highly of us and encourage us. Again he would warn us lest we should frustrate this future consummation by becoming entangled in worldly desires, and further he would keep us under control by carefully observing even the minute details of our life. All this was done silently and unobtrusively. That was the great secret of his training of the disciples and moulding of their lives."

Of the young disciples, Naren possessed the most penetrating intellect and was also critical, and as such he did not accept as gospel truth any word of the Master without carefully weighing it in the balance of his judgement; whereas his other disciples who were of the devotional type and were generally guided more by emotion than by reason, did not consider it necessary to probe into the genuineness or otherwise of the

inspired utterances of Sri Ramakrishna. Narendranath thus differed fundamentally in temper and genius from other disciples of the Master. Endowed with a rare insight and intellectual acumen, Naren was also able to assess the real value and deep import of the pregnant expressions of the Master, which, more often than not, eluded the comprehension of his other disciples. One example would suffice: One day some time during the year 1884, Sri Ramakrishna, while expounding to his devotees the cardinal tenets of the *Vaishnava* religion in his own room, said: "The religion enjoins upon its followers the practice of three things, viz. relish for the name of God, compassion for all living creatures and service to the *Vaishnavas*,—the devotees of the Lord." After a while in a semi-conscious mood he said to himself, "Compassion to creatures! Compassion to creatures! Thou fool! An insignificant worm crawling on earth, thou to show compassion to others! Who art thou to show compassion? No, it cannot be. It is not compassion for others, but rather service to man, recognizing him to be the veritable manifestation of God!" Among those who listened to the Master, there was Naren who found a special significance in these inspired utterances of Sri Ramakrishna. After coming out of the room he said to others, "What a strange light have I discovered in these wonderful words of the Master! How beautifully has he reconciled the ideal of *bhakti* with the knowledge of the *Vedanta* . . . I have understood that the ideal of *Vedanta* lived by the recluse outside the pale of society can be practised even from hearth and home and applied to all our daily schemes of life. Whatever may be the avocation of a man, let him understand and realise that it is God alone Who has manifested Himself as the world and created beings. He is both immanent and transcendent. It is He Who has become all diverse creatures, objects of our love, respect or compassion, and yet He is beyond all these. Such realization of Divinity in humanity leaves no room for arrogance. By realizing it a man cannot have any jealousy or pity for any other being. Service of man, knowing him to be the manifestation of God, purifies the heart and, in no time, such an aspirant realizes himself as part and parcel of God—Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. . . . The embodied being cannot remain even for a minute without doing any work. All his activities should be directed

to the service of man, the manifestation of God upon earth, and this will accelerate his progress towards the goal. However, if it be the will of God, the day will soon come when I shall proclaim this grand truth before the world at large. I shall make it the common property of all, the wise and the fool, the rich and the poor, the Brahmin and the Pariah." We all know how, after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Narendranath (as Swami Vivekananda) translated his ideas into action and made the Ideal of Service one of the fundamental principles of the Ramakrishna Brotherhood for self-liberation as also for the well-being of humanity at large.

At Shyampukur

The health of Sri Ramakrishna began to show signs of deterioration under the severe strain put upon it by his constant discourses with the devotees and visitors. Moreover, in the middle of 1885 he developed a throat trouble (i.e. clergyman's sore throat) which ultimately developed into a fatal cancer. To prevent further aggravation, he was advised by eminent physicians not to indulge in too much talking or to go into frequent trances (*samadhi*). But these cautions proved ineffective as he could hardly restrain himself from spiritual discourses and trances which were the very breath of his life. To facilitate the treatment of Sri Ramakrishna, he was very soon removed in the early part of October, 1885, first to a small rented house at Durgacharan Mookherjee Street, Baghbazar (Calcutta). But as he did not like it, he straightway went to Balam Babu's house at Ramakanta Bose Street, Baghbazar. Within a week, i.e. in the middle of October, he was shifted to a spacious house at Shyampukur and placed under the medical treatment of Dr. Mahendra Lall Sarkar, the then leading Homeopath of Calcutta. Narendranath and his brother disciples, viz. Sashi, Baburam, Rakhal, Kali and others, as also the householder devotees including Girish Chandra Ghosh, Balam Bose, Ramachandra Dutta, Mahendranath Gupta (Master-Mahashaya), Devendranath Mazumdar and the like, applied themselves whole-heartedly to the service of the Master at this critical hour. The Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi (the consort of Sri Ramakrishna) also came from Dakshineswar to the Shyampukur House to render

unto him whatever personal service was possible for her to do under this trying situation.

The news of Sri Ramakrishna's advent in Calcutta spread like wildfire and this place also became in no time a centre of very great attraction. Devotees in large numbers and many seekers after truth from different places began to crowd into this holy resort for spiritual guidance and enlightenment. The illness of Sri Ramakrishna thus provided an occasion for the devotees, both young and old, to bind themselves together into a holy fraternity. They all vied with one another to mould their lives in the light of the lofty spiritual ideals set before them by the great Master.

Narendranath soon noticed that a group of young disciples had begun to imitate the spiritual ecstasies of the Master in the course of devotional music. They would weep and dance and fall into partial trances accompanied by physical contortions, etc. It did not take much time for the level-headed and keen-eyed Narendranath to discern that this frequent outburst of emotion in the case of many was neither attended by a corresponding transformation of character nor based on discrimination, stern austerity, self-control and uncompromising renunciation which formed the very core of the spiritual life and realization of the Master. Anticipating the danger of a physical and mental breakdown due to such frothy sentimentalism, Narendranath took up the task of toning them up at leisure hours by means of songs and discourses instinct with the ideas of renunciation and sincere devotion, and also by holding before them the glowing pictures of the Master's long-drawn *sadhana* and spirit of dispassion for the ephemeral objects of the world. Thus Narendranath, though engaged in his own spiritual pursuits, eventually succeeded in canalizing the emotions of his brother disciples in the right direction and in strengthening the bond of spiritual fellowship among themselves in the course of their devoted service to the Master. But, as days rolled on, the condition of the Master went from bad to worse and the best available medical treatment proved futile in arresting the rapid aggravation of the fatal disease. Seeing the worsening condition of Sri Ramakrishna's health, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar suggested his immediate removal from the foul and congested air of the locality to some other place where he would be able to breathe a fresh and pure atmosphere.

Accordingly the Master was removed for better treatment to the rented garden-house of Sri Gopal Chandra Ghosh at Cossipore on the afternoon of the 11th December, 1885. Sri Ramakrishna felt himself quite at home in that beautiful garden-house which was free from the dirt and the nerve-racking noise of the town.

At the Cossipore Garden

Sri Ramakrishna—the Seraphic Soul—was never so brilliant and aggressive in his spiritual ministry as he was now. Like the mellowed glow of the setting sun that brightens up into a crimson beauty just before its final plunge into the immensity of the western horizon, the serene spiritual light of the life of the great Master similarly flamed into an effulgent halo immediately before his passing away. Though extremely emaciated and physically broken down, Sri Ramakrishna gave out his best to the most intimate circle of his disciples and devotees during the closing days of his life at Cossipore so as to make them fit instruments for the propagation of his message in the world. He singled out his beloved Naren as the head of the group as he discerned in him all those bright traits of spiritual leadership needed to weld the heterogeneous elements of young boys into a homogeneous spiritual brotherhood. Sri Ramakrishna once commissioned Naren to look after the young disciples and to see that they carried on spiritual practices and did not return home after his passing away. Naren, whose personality was like a blazing fire, welcomed this mandate as a sacred task and spared no pains to kindle in them an undying yearning for the achievement of the highest end of human existence through study, music, conversations and enlightened discussions on the divine qualities of their Master's character.

As days glided on without bringing even a modicum of relief to the Master's physical sufferings, Narendranath got alarmed that the dearest one of his heart might one day bid adieu to all, leaving them behind like a rudderless ship drifting to and fro in this uncharted ocean of life. He grew restless and impatient. Being unable to control his feeling, one chilly night Narendranath walked into the garden in the company of some of

his *gurubhais* (brother-disciples), sat under the star-lit canopy of heaven and, collecting dry leaves and twigs together, set fire to them. With a mind full of intense *vairagyam* (dispassion), Narendranath began to dwell on the manifold realizations of the Master, and impressed upon them the urgent need of renouncing everything and striving their level best for the achievement of the noblest objective of their lives before the Master quitted the mortal coil. In a highly inspired mood, Naren told them that it was at such a silent hour of the night that the monks lighted their *dhuni* fire, carried on meditation and burnt their desires which were the sources of all miseries and bondage on earth. Inspired by these illuminating talks, they felt that they were actually making an oblation of their sordid desires into the sacred fire and were getting purified.

Though a great spiritual unrest was raging within, Narendranath outwardly maintained a calm sangfroid with his characteristic fortitude and self-control even in the midst of the manifold depressing conditions of life, and stood firm and unshaken like a veritable rock to inspire courage and confidence in the young disciples who had been committed to his charge by the Master. But as the end of the Master drew much nearer, his mental agony and disquiet increased thousandfold and his inner self became a veritable cauldron of bubbling spiritual discontent. Knowing his mental condition, Sri Ramakrishna could no longer keep the desire of his beloved Naren unfulfilled. His insistent appeal for that blessed realization which resulted from the *nirvikalpa samadhi* at long last attained to fruition. One evening, unexpectedly, the mind of Naren soared high up into the indefinable stillness of the Absolute wherein space vanishes into nothingness, time is swallowed up in eternity and causation becomes a dream of the past,—a state in which the knowledge, knower and known become one indivisible consciousness, and the self, shattering the prison of matter, merges in the infinite glory of *Brahman*. At about 9 o'clock at night Naren returned to normal consciousness but his heart was still filled to overflowing with ineffable ecstasy. After a while when Naren prostrated himself before Sri Ramakrishna, he tenderly said to him, "Now then, the Mother has shown you everything. Just as a treasure is locked up in a box, so will this realization you have just had lie locked up and the key shall remain with

me. You have work to do. When you will have finished my work, the treasure box will be unlocked again, and you will know everything then just as you do now." Afterwards the Master said to the other disciples that the moment Naren would realize who he was, he would pass away of his own will. The time also was not far when he would shake the world to its foundations through the strength of his intellectual and spiritual powers. The readers would see how the subsequent events of the life of Narendranath proved the truth of the prophetic utterance of the great Master regarding the future glorious destiny of his beloved disciple.

In various ways Sri Ramakrishna was preparing Naren to be the head of the young group of the would-be apostles who were to consecrate their lives very soon to carry out his mission on this earth. One day the Master sent out the boys to beg food from door to door (i.e. for *madhukari bhiksha*) with a view to training them in the prospective monastic life. On another day he distributed ochre cloths and *rudraksha* beads to them, made them go through a religious ceremony and thus sowed in the soil of Bengal the seed of the future Ramakrishna Order, which was to grow and develop into a powerful religious organization. Knowing that his end was imminent, the Master, in order to endow Naren with the spiritual wealth which he himself had acquired after years of superhuman efforts and unprecedented austerities, called him to his side only three or four days before his *mahasamadhi*. Having seated him in front and looking intently into the eyes of his dear disciple, he fell into a deep trance. Naren felt the powerful impact of a tremendous force passing into his own body and soon lost all body-consciousness. When, after a while, Naren came to himself, the Master was found shedding tears. When interrogated, Sri Ramakrishna softly replied, "Oh Naren, today I have given you my all and have become a *fakir* (beggar). . . . By the force of the power transmitted by me, great things will be done by you ; only after that, will you go to whence you came."

Another incident of deep spiritual significance also occurred only a couple of days before the final deliverance of the Master. Standing by the bedside of Sri Ramakrishna, Naren thought that he would accept him as an Incarnation of God if he could declare in the midst of this excruciating

physical suffering that he was God incarnate. Scarcely had this idea flashed across his mind when the Master distinctly said, "O my Naren, are you not yet convinced? He who was Rama and Krishna is now Ramakrishna in this body,—but not from the standpoint of your *Vedanta*." Naren was extremely abashed and stung with self-reproach to think that he still doubted the Master even after so much experiment and revelation.

The Master had now the satisfaction of seeing his young disciples united under the leadership of Narendranath into a spiritual fraternity with one common resolve to dedicate themselves to the service of humanity, and peacefully entered into *mahasamadhi* on August 16, 1886.

In the Baranagar Monastery

The grief of the young disciples as also of the householder devotees knew no bounds at the passing away of their beloved Master. But they did not lose heart even in this most tragic situation. A ray of light was soon discernible on the horizon when Surendranath Mitra, a staunch lay-disciple of the Master, came forward unexpectedly at this hour of trial with a proposal to rent an old dilapidated house at Baranagore to provide shelter for those blessed souls who had already renounced their hearth and home for the sake of the Master, and also to create an opening for the householder devotees to occasionally come there for spiritual inspiration and guidance. The suggestion of Surendranath was hailed with enthusiasm by all and the portion of the sacred relics of the Master which Narendranath and his *gurubhais* had preserved with so much care in an urn was soon enshrined in that house for daily ceremonial worship. Moreover, all the articles that were used by Sri Ramakrishna in the Cossipore garden were soon removed to this new habitat and preserved with great care as sacred mementos of the Master. Though some of the young disciples had by this time gone back to their respective homes under the pressure of circumstances over which they had no control, Narendranath, by dint of his personal magnetism and whirlwind of enthusiasm, succeeded in rallying them together at the newly started monastery. The whole place throbbed in no time with an unprecedented vivacity and spiritual power. The fire of

enthusiasm thus kindled in them and constantly fed by their ever-deepening yearning for the realization of the Truth as also by their whole-souled earnestness for the fulfilment of the mission of their Master, spurred them on to face the travail of a new birth and meet the challenges of internal and external nature with indomitable courage and confidence.

A very significant incident occurred a few days after their coming to the Baranagore monastery. Invited by the mother of Baburam, Naren and some of his brother-disciples went to Antpur and lived there for some time. During this period Naren kept them all spell-bound by his devotional songs and soul-enthraling discourses on the thrilling tales of the Master's life of renunciation and sacrifice. As a result, their monastic idealism received an added momentum in the silent atmosphere of this rural home, and they inwardly felt themselves knit together into one single body. One night in the chilly month of December in 1886, they lighted the *dhuni*-fire and sitting beside it, got so much inspired to hear from their beloved Naren the wonderful story of Lord Jesus who had laid down his life for the redemption of the world, that they became totally oblivious of time and place and took the vow of leading a life of renunciation for the realization of God. It was afterwards discovered that it was Christmas Eve, and they inferred that this might be one of the reasons why such an apostolic fervour so suddenly gripped their thought on that night and the atmosphere became so surcharged with the holy spirit of Lord Jesus.

Some time during this period they performed the sacred *viraja homa** at the Baranagore monastery and formally took the vows of lifelong celibacy and poverty. The old names were discarded and new ones§ were

* A sacred ceremony which is gone through on the occasion of taking the vow of monastic life.

§ 1.	Rakhal Chandra Ghosh	...	Swami Brahmananda
2.	Gopal Sur (Senior)	...	Swami Advaitananda
3.	Latu	...	Swami Adbhutananda
4.	Taraknath Ghosal	...	Swami Shivananda
5.	Baburam Ghosh	...	Swami Premananda
6.	Nityaniranjan Ghosh	...	Swami Niranjanananda
7.	Yogindranath Roy Chowdhury	...	Swami Yogananda
8.	Sarat Chandra Chakravorty	...	Swami Saradananda
9.	Sashibhusan Chakravorty	...	Swami Ramakrishnananda
10.	Harinath Chattopadhyay	...	Swami Turiyananda
11.	Sri Gangadhar Ghatak	...	Swami Akhandananda
12.	Kaliprasad Chandra	...	Swami Abhedananda
13.	Subodh Chandra Ghosh	...	Swami Subodhananda
14.	Saradaprasanna Mitra	...	Swami Trigunatitananda
15.	Hariprasanna Chatterjee	...	Swami Vijnanananda,—and so on.

assumed to complete their severance from the former ways of life. Narendranath who changed his name several times, finally took the name of Swami Vivekananda according to the suggestion of his own disciple, the Maharaja of Khetri, a few days before his starting for the West.

The life of severest spiritual austerities lived, the hardship and direst poverty endured and the spirit of unique self-denial exhibited in the Baranagore monastery by this heroic band of Sannyasins form a thrilling episode in the history of the Ramakrishna movement. Swamiji himself in a reminiscent mood once spoke to a disciple: "There were days at the Baranagore Math when we had nothing to eat. If there was rice, salt was lacking. Some days, that was all we had, but nobody cared. Leaves of the *bimba* creeper boiled, salt and rice—this was our diet for months! Come what would, we were indifferent. We were being carried on in a strong tide of religious practices and meditation. Oh, what days! Demons would have run away at the sight of such austerities, to say nothing of men!"⁵ Romain Rolland gives a glimpse of the significant role Swamiji himself played at the Baranagore Math: "He (Naren) kept its members ever on the alert, he harried their minds without pity: he read them the great books of human thought, he explained to them the evolution of the universal mind, he forced them to dry and impassioned discussion of all the great philosophical and religious problems, he led them indefatigably towards the wide horizons of boundless truth, which surpass all limits of schools and races, and embrace and unify all particular truths. This synthesis of spirit achieved the promise of Sri Ramakrishna's message of love. The unseen Master presided over their meetings. They were able to place their intellectual labours at the service of his universal heart."⁶

Call of the Forest

The more these young apostles of the New Dispensation intensified their spiritual austerities within the four walls of their newly started monastery at Baranagore, the more they began to feel from within a stirring call to break all barriers to taste the freedom of the open and the silence of the high hills. The holy precincts of the Math appeared to them to be too



Swami Vivekananda as a Parivrajaka

return to Baranagore. The venturesome spiritual quest of the young sojourner did not, however, go in vain. "This very first journey had brought ancient India vividly before his eyes,—eternal India,—the India of the Vedas, with its race of heroes and gods, clothed in the glory of legend and history, Aryans, Moghuls and Dravidians—all one. At the first impact he realized the spiritual unity of India and Asia and he communicated this discovery to the brethren of Baranagore".⁷

At Ghazipur, in the course of his second journey in 1889, Swamiji came into intimate contact with the illustrious saint Pavhari Baba, whom he held in high respect for his *yogic* powers and extreme form of self-denial. Though he had to come back to the monastery very soon this time also, every such sporadic pilgrimage indubitably brought in its wake a fund of new ideas and experience to him. But his mind still pined for penetrating again into the depths of the snow-clad Himalayas to equip himself, by means of meditation and mental discipline, with a tremendous spiritual power to carry on his Master's work without let or hindrance. With this end in view he again set out on his pilgrimage to the Himalayas in July 1890, telling his *gurubhais*, "I shall not return until I acquire such realization, that my very touch will transform a man." Before starting for the journey, he went to Ghushuree, a village across the Ganges, to meet the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and received her hearty blessings for the success of his mission. At Varanasi he stayed a few days with his friend Sri Pramadas Mitra, a highly erudite Sanskrit scholar. While taking leave of him, Swamiji said, "I am going away ; but I shall never come back until I can burst on society like a bomb, and make it follow me like a dog." Swami Akhandananda, one of his *gurubhais*, who had just returned from his Tibetan tour with a thrilling experience of the life and tradition of the land of the Lamas, and was familiar with the intricacies of the mountainous tracts, was now his sole companion in this most arduous sojourn in the bosom of the Himalayas—the matrix of Indian thought and culture.

The invigorating air, the beautiful waterfalls, the roaring rivers rushing with foamy fury through myriads of boulders, the flora and fauna of the vales and dales, the warbling birds and flowering plants, the snowy peaks of the Himalayas and, above all, the sublime grandeur and the mystic

silence of the scene—all filled the great Swami with a rapturous joy rarely to be experienced amidst the din and bustle of a work-a-day world. Whether at Almora, a beauty-spot in the heart of the Himalayas, or in a lonely cottage in the company of his brother-monk Swami Turiyananda by the bank of the holy Alakananda at Srinagar, whether at Tehri or Rajpur, at Hardwar or Rishikesh, the holy seat of saints and sages,—everywhere the Swami put himself into the treadmill of hard spiritual discipline to get ready for the great task ahead. But they had to give up their long-cherished project to visit the sanctuaries of Kedarnath and Badrinath—the abodes, respectively, of Lord Shiva and Vishnu—as the road leading to these sacred places of pilgrimage was closed by the Government due to a virulent outbreak of famine in and around the area.

Historic Tour and Discovery of India

A grim struggle had so long been raging within the great Swami between the two apparently conflicting forces—one to dive into the bottomless depth of the ocean of Reality to pick up gems of supreme spiritual wisdom, and the other to jump into the fray of life to mitigate the untold miseries of the inarticulate millions and to liquidate the illiteracy and untouchability that were eating into the vitals of the race. The latter ideal now loomed so large before his vision that he determined to snap the golden ties of love and affection of his monastic brothers, and plunge into the trackless ocean of India to do the bidding of the Master. With this lofty objective, he left Delhi in February, 1891, where he had come from Meerut, and began his historic itineracy of two years through the vast expanse of his motherland. "He wandered free from plan, caste, home, constantly alone with God. And there was no single hour of his life when he was not brought into contact with the sorrows, the desires, the abuses and feverishness of living men, rich and poor, in town and field ; he became one with their lives ; the great Book of Life revealed to him what all the books in the libraries could not have done, . . . the tragic face of the present day, the God struggling in humanity, the cry of the people of India and of the world for help and the heroic duty of the new Oedipus, whose

task it was to deliver Thebes from the talons of the Sphinx or to perish with Thebes.”⁸

This memorable sojourn, replete as it was with many a thrilling incident and experience, was significant in a variety of ways. Occasions were not wanting when this wandering monk with a staff and a begging bowl in hand, met and conversed on equal terms with Rajas and Maharajas and persons of high position and pedigree, and taught them their duties and responsibilities towards the ignorant and indigent masses wallowing in the mud-puddle of superstition, and also when he identified himself in keen sympathy with the crushing poverty of the despised Pariahs and learnt lessons of highest wisdom from the lowliest and the lost. While at Alwar as a guest of Pandit Sambhunathji, a retired Engineer of the State, the Swami became the centre of very great attraction. Hindus, Muslims and Christians,—people belonging to the different strata of society,—began to crowd into the place from day to day. They were struck with the profound scholarship and catholicity of this Hindu monk and were inspired to listen, with reverence, to his illuminating discourses and topics covering almost all the phases of human thought from the ancient times to the present day. Very soon Major Ramchandraj, the Dewan of the Maharaja of Alwar, came to know of the presence of Swamiji in the State and extended a cordial invitation to him, to which he gladly responded. The Dewan who was highly religious-minded, wanted that the Maharaja Mangal Singh, who had become very much Anglicised, should be brought under the benign influence of the dynamic personality of such a learned monk so that he might turn over a new leaf. At the request of the Dewan, Prince Mangal Singh came to his house and sat in front of the Swami with all respect and humility. In the course of the interesting conversation that followed, the Prince in a semi-jocular vein said, “Well, Babaji Maharaj, I have no faith in idol worship. What is going to be my fate? I cannot worship wood, earth, stone, or metal like other people. Does this mean that I shall fare worse in the life hereafter?” Swamiji looked around and found a picture of the Maharaja hanging on the wall. Without a moment’s hesitation Swamiji asked the Dewan to bring the picture down and give it to him. Getting the picture in his hand, Swamiji asked the Dewan to spit on it. The Dewan

who held the Maharaja in high esteem, could hardly persuade himself to comply with the preposterous request of the Swami who repeated it several times. The whole audience was dumb-founded, and awe-struck to hear such a peremptory order of the Swami. The Dewan cried out in bewilderment, "What! Swamiji? What are you asking me to do? This is the likeness of our Maharaja! How can I do such a thing?" "Be it so," said the Swami, "but the Maharaja is not bodily present in this photograph. This is only a piece of paper. It does not contain his bones and flesh and blood. It does not speak or behave or move in any way as does the Maharaja. And yet all of you refuse to spit upon it, because you see in the photo the shadow of the Maharaja's form. Indeed, in spitting upon the photo, you feel that you insult your master, the Prince himself." Turning to the Maharaja he continued, "See, your Highness, though this is not you in one sense, in another sense it is you. That was why your devoted servants were so perplexed when I asked them to spit on it. It has a shadow of you ; it brings you into their minds. One glance at it makes them see you in it. Therefore they look upon it with as much respect as they do upon your own person. Thus it is with the devotees who worship stone and metal images of gods and goddesses. It is because an image brings to their minds their *Ishta*, or some special form and attributes of the Divinity, and helps them to concentrate, that the devotees worship God in an image. They do not worship the stone or the metal as such. Everyone is worshipping, O Maharaja, the same one God who is the Supreme Spirit, the Soul of pure knowledge. And God appears to all even according to their understanding and their representation of Him." Mangal Singh, who was so long listening spell-bound to the wonderful exposition of the real import of image-worship, was overwhelmed with emotion and apologetically spoke to the Swami with folded hands, "Swamiji! I must admit that according to the light you have thrown upon image-worship, I have never yet met anyone who has worshipped stone, or wood, or metal. Heretofore I did not understand its meaning! You have opened my eyes! But what will be my fate? Have mercy on me." The Swami answered, "O Prince, none but God can be merciful to one, and He is ever-merciful! Pray to Him. He will show His mercy unto you."

Instances of this nature can be multiplied to show how during the tour this heroic monk of India, with his characteristic frankness and boldness, taught men of light and leading what he considered to be true and proper and thereby brought about a complete change in their mental make-up and intellectual outlook. But this intellectual daring and conquest notwithstanding, there were occasions when the Swami had the humility and nobleness to learn lessons of highest wisdom even from the most despised member of the society. Once when Swamiji was staying near Jaipur with his initiated disciple, the Maharaja of Khetri, he was invited by the Maharaja to a musical entertainment provided by a dancing girl. But the monastic instinct of the Swami was too strong to yield to the insistent request of his dear disciple. When the news of Swamiji's refusal to join the party was heard by the girl, she was cut to the quick and, in the agony of her heart, she immediately burst into the highly instructive song of the Vaishnava Saint Surdas to teach, as it were, a great lesson to the great Sannyasin :

“O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!
 Thy name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness.
 One piece of iron is in the image in the temple,
 And another is the knife in the hand of the butcher ;
 But when they touch the philosopher's stone,
 Both alike turn to gold,
 So, Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!
 Thy name, Lord, is Same-sightedness.
 One drop of water is in the sacred Jumna,
 And another is foul in the ditch by the roadside ;
 But when they fall into the Ganges
 Both alike become holy.
 So, Lord, do not look upon my evil qualities
 Thy name, Lord, is Same-sightedness.”

Swamiji, an Advaitist *par excellence*, who was staying at a little distance in a separate tent, became so much overwhelmed with the emotional appeal of the song sung by the girl with deep fervour, that he could no longer resist the request. The meaningful song instantly reminded him that the Divinity knows no distinction of caste, creed, colour or sex. He dwells

equally in the high and the low, in the pure and the impure, in the rich and the poor. He is Sameness everywhere. Referring to this instructive experience later, the Swami said, "That incident removed the scales from my eyes. Seeing that all are indeed the manifestations of the One, I could no longer condemn anybody."

In the course of his epoch-making *wanderjahre* (years of travel) which led him through the various historic and religious places of Rajputana, the land of heroes and heroines, Gujrat, Bombay, Mysore, Malabar and Madura, up to the temple of Rameswar, the Varanasi of Southern India, and farther beyond to Kanya Kumari, the southernmost sanctuary of the Great Goddess, he availed himself of every opportunity not only to keenly watch and study the life and condition of India but also to enrich his stock of knowledge in Sanskrit by mastering the *Mahabhashya* (the great commentary of Patanjali on the *Sutras* of Panini)—sometimes from a distinguished grammarian of Jaipur, sometimes from Pandit Narayandas, the then most renowned Sanskrit scholar residing in the court of the Maharaja of Khetri, and sometimes from Pandit Shankar Pandurang, an illustrious Vedic scholar in the State of Porbandar. As a matter of fact, this intimate acquaintance of the Swami with the intricacies and peculiarities of Sanskrit grammar enabled him to thoroughly understand the *Brahma-Sūtra* and other abstruse Vedantic treatises and to hold enlightened discussion at ease with the reputed Sanskrit savants of the time whenever situation demanded it. Once in the presence of His Holiness Jagatguru Sri Sankaracharya of the Gobardhan Math, a conference of learned Pandits was convened in the court of the Thakore Saheb of Limbdi, and Swamiji, who was also invited to participate in it, acquitted himself most creditably in the discussion and earned the love and blessings of His Holiness. At another time when the Swami went to Mysore and was introduced to His Highness the Maharaja Sri Chamarajendra Wadiyar by his Dewan Sir Seshadri Iyer, the Maharaja in the course of the talk was so much struck with the Swami's brilliance of thought, charm of personality, depth of learning and penetrating religious insight that he used to seek his salutary advice on many important matters even though the Swami with his usual straightforwardness did not hesitate to point out to His Highness the draw-

backs that generally came to his notice. During his stay in Mysore the Swami was once requested to be present in a great assembly of Pandits held in the Palace-hall and to participate in the discussion on some intricate points of the *Vedanta* philosophy. When the Pandits failed to arrive at a definite decision on a subtle controversial issue, it was Swamiji who, with his deep spiritual insight, intellectual acumen and profound knowledge of the *Vedanta* philosophy, dealt with the subject in a masterly way and in a telling language, and quickly brought the stormy wrangling of the Pandits to a happy end.

At Trivandrum, Swamiji was the guest of the learned Professor Sri Sundarama Iyer, tutor to the nephew of the Maharaja of Travancore. There he came in contact with a distinguished scholar named Sri Rangachariar of Madras, then Professor of Chemistry at the Maharaja's College. Both the savants were so deeply impressed by the versatility of the genius of Swamiji and also by the sublimity and simplicity of his personality that they spent hour after hour in illuminating conversation with him on a variety of subjects ranging from the highest metaphysical flights of the *Vedanta* philosophy to modern Kant and Hegel, from the splendid achievements of Science to the glories of art and music, both ancient and modern, and from the sublimities of ancient *Yoga* to the complex problems of education and sociology, and they were amazed and enraptured by the vast range of his mental horizon. Prof. S. Iyer, while paying an eloquent and respectful tribute to the Swami in his personal reminiscences, says: "During all the time he stayed, he took captive every heart within the home. To everyone of us he was all sweetness, all tenderness, all grace. My sons were frequently in his company, and one of them still swears by him and has the most vivid and endearing recollections of his visit and of his stirring personality . . . When he left, it seemed for a time as if the light had gone out of our home." On his way to the holy city of Rameswaram, the Varanasi of Southern India, the Swami met at Madura the Raja of Ramnad, Bhaskar Setupati, who was one of the most enlightened princes of the time in India. Attracted by his charming personality, profound erudition and depth of spiritual wisdom, the Raja became his devoted disciple and dedicated his life to the service of the people of his State.

Vision of a New India

Thus the great Swami gathered manifold experiences not only for his own benefit and enlightenment but also as a preparation for the fulfilment of the lofty mission of the Master in a manner befitting the magnitude of the task ahead. During the two years of his eventful pilgrimage from the dreamy poetic regions of the snow-capped Himalayas down to Kanyakumari, the southernmost extremity of India, his body and mind did not know any rest ; he suffered from extreme privation, hunger and thirst, from inconceivable affront and indignity, and also faced innumerable trials and tribulations and sometimes endangered his life. But through the grace of Sri Ramakrishna he emerged from the fiery ordeal with a more expanded heart, broader vision and richer experience. Reaching the sacred sanctuary of the Goddess Kanyakumari, the Swami offered his whole-souled worship to the Divine Mother and was filled with an ecstasy of celestial bliss. But the raging tempest of his heart that made him bid adieu to his hearth and home and traverse the vast expanse of India barefooted for years together as a penniless pilgrim with a begging bowl and a staff in hand did not die down there. Though jaded and tired, he flung himself into the rolling deep, swam across the narrow strait to a small piece of stone rising above the swelling sea at a little distance from the shore, and sitting motionless on the last stone of India, soon plunged into the silence of the soul in profound meditation of his motherland.

It was indeed a red-letter day for India ; for in the dim twilight of evening he had a vivid glimpse of the glories of the past and the tragedies of the present, and discovered the wonderful oneness of thought and culture underlying the colourful multiplicity of her races and creeds, castes and customs, and her ideals and traditions. But the lurid picture of the present tragedies silhouetted on the background of her glorious past brought painful thoughts to his mind. Tears rolled down the cheeks of this heroic monk to contemplate how India, once a land of plenty and profusion—a veritable El Dorado, had become one of the poorest countries in the world by a mysterious combination of circumstances ; how most of the villages had become the veritable dens of jackals and hyenas, a creeping paralysis had

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spread over almost every limb of her rural system, and thousands of her children were dying of want and diseases. Blood pounded in his ears like the sea at his feet to recall the tragic phenomenon that the once bold and industrious peasantry that peopled the smiling and peaceful villages of ancient and medieval India, and the skilled artisans who in towns carried their various manufactures into a state of perfection and exported the industrial products to the different countries of the East and the West, had become utterly emasculated, lifeless and almost extinct due to an organised process of exploitation and vandalism in the course of less than 150 years of foreign rule. A mute appeal rising all around him from the oppressed soul of India, the tragic contrast between the august grandeur of her ancient might and the sordid degradation of the country brought about by her children devoured his heart. But he discerned through his spiritual vision a silver lining of hope on the horizon even in the midst of this gathering gloom of despair. For he felt that the country, though fallen and degraded, still possessed the vitality and strength to rise once again to its pristine position of glory and freedom. In the medley of thoughts that crowded to his mind, he did not count upon the Rajas and Maharajas who were buried deep in the downy bed of luxuries and were deaf to the pitiful cry of the hungry and suppressed millions of the land, but upon those sturdy young men and women who, fired with the zeal of holiness, imbued with a spirit of renunciation and service—the twin ideals of India,—fortified with eternal faith in the Lord and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen, would march ahead with healthy minds, full of the reverence for the 'glory that was Ind', full of the appreciation of the realities of the present, and pulsating with hopes for the future.

He realized that the best way to awaken the self-forgetful Indians to the consciousness of their infinite possibilities and to open their eyes to the richness of their own cultural heritage was to spread the light of education among the grovelling masses from one end of the country to the other. And the education to be rendered fruitful and effective must not be limited to the knowledge of religious truths alone but should be comprehensive enough to embrace all aspects of human culture both secular and spiritual.

It further dawned on him that it would be suicidal if the Indians raised

a war-cry against everything foreign inasmuch as no nation could live a life of self-sufficient exclusiveness without spelling disaster to itself. The world was fast moving towards a synthesis of ideas and ideals and the life of every race or nation was bound to be interlinked with that of the rest of the world. The only course left to the Indians was to incorporate the best elements of Western civilization into the texture of their own thought and culture. The Orient would really be benefited by a somewhat greater activity and energy of the West, as the latter would profit by an admixture of Eastern introspection and meditative habit. Science coupled with *Vedanta* was the ideal of the future humanity. A great seer, Swami Vivekananda visualized the evolution of a new civilization in which the various types of cultures would be harmoniously blended and still would have adequate scope for full play and development.

The vision of a new India maddened the Swami in these moments of meditation and he woke up from his reverie with a grim resolve to go to the West to carry the universal message of the Master and to get back in exchange the material resources for feeding the hungry mouths of his own moribund race so as to make them physically fit for the struggle of life. He took the sacred vow that 'he would throw away even the bliss of the *nirvikalpa samadhi* for the liberation of his fellowmen in India and abroad'. Thus was revealed to him by the spirit of the Master the Vision of a New India—the fruition of the deep meditations of many years in one of the most luminous moments of his life.

Call from the West

The more the Swami brooded over the sad lot of the politically prostrate, economically atrophied and culturally bewildered people of India, the more strongly did he feel an inner impetus to go to the land beyond the seas to discover ways and means to mitigate the untold sufferings of his countrymen; for he remembered the significant utterance of the Master, "Religion is not for empty bellies." The famished country must first be fed and clothed and rendered physically fit to think of the subtle problems of religion and philosophy. As a matter of fact, this idea of going to the West had flashed

in his mind even when he was trekking through India, and he broached it for the first time to Mr. C. H. Pandya at Junagad. It received an added momentum at Porbandar towards the end of 1891 when Pandit Shankar Pandurang, impressed by Swamiji's intellectual brilliance and breadth and originality of his views, advised him not to fritter away his energy in India but to go to the West where people would appreciate his worth much better and where he would be able to put new interpretation on Western thought and culture in the light of the universal ideals of the *Sanatan Dharma* (Eternal Religion) as reflected in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. It was about this time that Swamiji heard, somewhere between Junagad and Porbandar, that a Parliament of Religions would be held in 1893 at Chicago in America. While staying at Khandwa (in the State of Indore in Central India) as a guest in the house of Sri Haridas Chatterjee, a distinguished pleader of the place, Swamiji's idea of attending the Parliament of Religions began to take shape, and he said to him: "If someone can help me with the passage money, all will be well, and I shall go." Swamiji reiterated the very same idea at Bangalore towards the end of October, 1892, in the presence of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore, when he burst forth into an eloquent description of his mission, and emphatically pointed out that India needed the modern scientific ideas of the Occident as well as a thorough organic reform, and that it was India's role and responsibility to carry to the West the treasures of her philosophical and spiritual truths. Swamiji, in the course of this discussion, again expressed his intentions to go to America to preach the gospel of the *Vedanta* to the Western nations. The proposal of the Swami was hailed with great enthusiasm by the Maharaja who promised the necessary financial help to cover all the expenses of the journey. The Swami declined to accept the generous offer for the present, as he still needed more time for mental preparation for the consummation of his desire.

Now, in the course of his meditation at Kanya Kumari, this idea matured into a sacred resolve and, swimming back to the mainland, he wended his way to Madras where he very soon attracted around him a brilliant galaxy of educated young men and made a public announcement of his intention of going to the West. In the heat of enthusiasm, his devotees and admirers

immediately began to collect funds to make it possible for him to sail for the foreign land in pursuit of his noble mission. In the meantime, in response to a cordial invitation from a group of friends at Hyderabad, Swamiji went to the place and it was a pleasant surprise for him to find that about five hundred people including the most distinguished dignitaries of the court of the Nizam, both Hindu and Muhammedan, had mustered strong on the platform to accord him a magnificent reception. During the period of his stay in the State, Swamiji was once invited by the Nawab Bahadur Sir Khurshid Jah, Amiri-i-Kabir, K.C.S.I., the foremost nobleman of Hyderabad and the brother-in-law of His Highness the Nizam. He met the Nawab in the palace of the Nizam and had an enlightened discussion with him on the essential features of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. The Nawab Bahadur, who was noted for his religious tolerance and was the first Muhammedan to visit all the Hindu places of pilgrimage in India, was so deeply impressed by the catholicity of the views of Swamiji that, when he disclosed his desire to go to the West to preach the gospel of the Universal Religion, he readily agreed to help him in his noble venture with one thousand rupees. Swamiji however did not accept the money at the time but told him that he would ask for it when he would actually embark on his cherished mission.

After his return to Madras from Hyderabad, Swamiji began to speak openly and aggressively about the Master and his mission. He soon became the centre of very great attraction and funds began to be collected from door to door by his disciples and friends whose number was daily on the increase. But the mind of Swamiji still rocked to and fro with a sense of uncertainty as to the success of the trip he was going to undertake. In such a perplexed state of mind Swamiji prayed to the Master and the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi for light and guidance. Several days later, he saw in a dream that Sri Ramakrishna was walking to the waters of the ocean, beckoning him to follow. The Swami was elated with joy to see this vision which unmistakably indicated the approval of the Master in this great undertaking. All doubts and misgivings were silenced and his mind got over the nervousness that temporarily had taken possession of him. But still he would not be satisfied unless he received the blessings of the Holy Mother

for the fruition of his mission. He wrote a letter to the Mother with a brief account of his plan and purpose. The Holy Mother instinctively recognized it to be the will of the Master and conveyed her heartfelt blessings to his beloved Naren in a letter full of overflowing love and affection. Thus fortified with this grace of the Holy Mother and the symbolic command of the Master in a dream to go to the West, Swamiji began to make hurried preparations for the great journey. Subsequently, after his resounding success in the Parliament of Religions, Swamiji, referring to the Holy Mother's grace, wrote to Swami Shivananda (one of his *Gurubhais*) from America in 1894: "You have not yet understood the wonderful significance of Mother's life—none of you. But gradually you will know. Without *Shakti* (Power), there is no regeneration for the world.....I am coming to understand things clearer every day, my insight is opening out more and more... To me, Mother's grace is a hundred thousand times more valuable than Father's. Mother's grace, Mother's blessings are all paramount to me... Please pardon me, I am a little bigoted here, as regards Mother. If but Mother orders, her demons can work anything. Brother, before proceeding to America I wrote to Mother to bless me. Her blessing came and at one bound I cleared the ocean..."

When Swamiji had almost finished the necessary preparations to embark for America, the Maharaja of Khetri, who had just been blessed with a son through the grace of the Swami (his *Guru*), deputed his Dewan Jagamohan Lal to bring the Swami to Khetri at least for a day. Swamiji could not resist the request and went to Khetri to fulfil the earnest desire of his devoted disciple. The Maharaja prostrated himself before his *Guru*, introduced him to the assembled guests and told them his decision to visit the West to preach the doctrines of the *Sanatan Dharma*. All present were mightily delighted to hear of the noble mission of the Swami. After a few days' stay with the Maharaja at Khetri, he finally bade adieu to all after adopting the name of Swami Vivekananda at the request of his devout royal disciple.

On his way to Bombay from where he was to board the ship "Peninsular" on May 31, (1893), he unexpectedly met two of his *Gurubhais*—Swami Brahmananda and Swami Turiyananda at the Mount Abu Road Station

and unburdened himself to them with a pathetic passion: "I have now travelled all over India. . . But alas, it was agony to me, my brothers, to see with my own eyes the terrible poverty and misery of the masses, and I could not restrain my tears. It is now my firm conviction that it is futile to preach religion amongst them without first trying to remove their poverty and their sufferings. It is for this reason—to find more means for the salvation of the poor of India—that I am now going to America." Referring to this meeting Swami Turiyananda said later to a young monk* of the Order, "I could clearly perceive that the sufferings of humanity were pulsating in the heart of Swamiji—his heart was a huge cauldron in which the sufferings of mankind were being made into a healing balm. Nobody could understand Vivekananda unless he saw at least a fraction of the volcanic feelings which were in him." Accompanied by Sri Jagamohan Lal, the Swami reached Bombay where Sri Alasinga Perumal, one of Swamiji's devoted disciples, had come all the way from Madras to meet him. At long last on the appointed day—the 31st May, 1893,—the Swami, after bidding farewell to all his intimate friends and admirers and his dear motherland, embarked the ship and started on his memorable voyage from the old world to the new. "The Swami stood on the deck gazing towards the land until it faded out of sight, constantly sending his benedictions to those who loved him and whom he loved so tenderly. His eyes were filled with tears; his heart was overwhelmed with emotion. He thought of the Master, of the Holy Mother, and of his *Gurubhais*. He thought of India and her culture, of her greatness and her sufferings, of the *Rishis* and of the *Dharma*. And his heart seemed to burst with love for his native land. Slowly he was encompassed by the black waters of the ocean . . . The ship moved on its way southward to Ceylon and the Swami was alone with his thoughts and the vastness of the sea".⁹

Meeting of the East and the West

The journey of Swami Vivekananda from the old world to the new was a historic event of momentous significance in that it not only opened an

* Swami Jnaneswarananda.

avenue for the transmission of the most sublime cultural ideas and ideals of India into the wide field of Western thought, but also linked up the two hemispheres once for all with the golden tie of mutual love and respect for the evolution of a richer type of civilization for the benefit of humanity at large. The ship carrying the great cultural ambassador of the East reached Colombo in Ceylon, the stronghold of Buddhism, where he spent almost a day in visiting the city redolent of the hallowed traditions of Buddhistic culture. From Ceylon, he proceeded towards Japan, the land of the rising sun, visiting on the way Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong and Canton (the then capital of China). Then he went to Nagasaki, one of the cleanliest cities of Japan. From there he went by land to Yokohama, Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo, and was extremely delighted to see these industrially advanced cities of Japan. During this sojourn Swamiji found suitable opportunities to get himself acquainted with the essential characteristics of the national life and the manners and customs of the people of the Island. He was moreover greatly surprised to notice a tremendous urge amongst all for modern progress in every department of their life and culture. Great was his amazement when he saw Sanskrit manuscripts written on the walls of a Chinese monastery in Canton and Sanskrit *Mantras* inscribed on some of the temples of Japan, in old Bengali characters.¹⁰ These evidences confirmed Swamiji's hypothesis that at one time Bengali *Bhikshus* travelled to these far distant lands, carrying with them the ennobling gospels of Lord Buddha and that an intimate cultural contact existed between India and the countries of the Far East.

Swamiji, though a stranger on board, soon got reconciled to the new conditions of life that obtained there in the ship. The fresh invigorating sea-breeze, the care-free atmosphere, the deep rolling sound of foam-crested waves playing rhythmically on the blue surface of the ocean spreading out into infinity, the fleecy clouds hanging against the distant horizon and also the courteous demeanour of the Captain and other European passengers—all served to relax his mental tension and soothe his soul, and the Swami began to look forward to the day when he would have to deliver to the world the great message of the Master with all the force of conviction that was his own.

From Yokohama the ship came to Vancouver in British Columbia, wherefrom he went by train through Canada to the city of Chicago where the World's Fair—the Universal Exposition— was being held at the time. After reaching the destination, he lodged himself in a hotel for the time being. On the following day when he went out to visit the Fair, he was struck dumb with wonder to see how all the latest scientific and artistic inventions of the entire world had been brought into a focus in that well-arranged and gorgeously decorated Exhibition. A keen and shrewd observer, Swami Vivekananda, while marvelling at the tremendous energy displayed by this panorama of exhibits, was able at the same time to gather useful experience about the inventive genius of the people of the West. But all his exhilaration was chilled almost to the freezing point when he came to learn from the Information Bureau of the Exposition that the proposed Parliament of Religions would not be held until after the 1st week of September, that no one would be allowed to attend it as a delegate without official references, and that the time for the registration of delegates had already gone by. Nothing could be more stunning and disconcerting than this piece of unwelcome information which he had just received from the Bureau. His heart sank within him as he did not come there as a representative of a recognized organization. It was then only the middle of July¹¹ and he would have still to wait for about two months more depending on his slender purse which was also being quickly exhausted.

But Swamiji was made of a different stuff. He was not the person to truckle to the adverse forces of life and to give up the noble mission to fulfil which he had come from afar to this distant land of America. Looking up to God as his sole guide, and believing in His infinite grace he girded up his loins and started for Boston (in Massachusetts) where living was less expensive than at Chicago. Mysterious are the ways of Providence. It was a sheer fluke that in the train bound for Boston, his prepossessing and handsome appearance and charming conversation soon attracted the attention of a rich lady who invited him to her farm called "Breezy Meadows" in Metcalf (in Massachusetts). Her name was Miss Kate Sanborn. During the period of his stay in the fashionable house of his obliging

hostess many distinguished persons called on the Swami and had interesting discussion with him on a variety of subjects. At this time Mr. J. H. Wright, Professor of Greek in the Harvard University, was living at Annisquam (Mass.), a small resort village on the Atlantic sea-board. Coming to hear much about the Swami from the members of the family of Miss Sanborn, he invited him to spend the week-end at his place. Nothing but Providential dispensation could effect such a happy meeting between the two great geniuses of the East and the West. Swamiji promptly responded to this esteemed invitation from a reputed scholar. Prof. Wright was so deeply impressed with the profundity of scholarship and the versatility of genius of this Hindu monk that he himself insisted that he should represent Hinduism in the Parliament of Religions. Swamiji explained the peculiar difficulties that stood in his way in the fulfilment of this object, and said that he did not possess any credentials whereby to introduce himself to the organizers of the Parliament. Prof. Wright, who had already discovered the sparkling intelligence and the rare ability of the Swami, said, "To ask you, Swami, for your credentials is like asking the Sun to state its right to shine". Prof. Wright, who was well known to the elite of the city of Chicago and also to many distinguished personages connected with the Parliament, wrote at once to his friend, the Chairman of the Committee on the selection of delegates, stating, "Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together." Moreover, he gave letters of introduction to the Committee which had the responsibility of providing accommodation for Oriental delegates. Knowing that the Swami was short of funds, he himself purchased a ticket for him to enable him to go to Chicago. The joy of the Swami knew no bounds to see this literal manifestation of the grace of the Master at this most dismal hour of his life.

Thus through the generous help of Prof. Wright, Swamiji came back to Chicago. But immediately after alighting from the train he discovered to his dismay that he had lost the address of the Committee. He was in great bewilderment as he could not ascertain what he should do under this most baffling situation. It was the chilly month of September and the night was fast approaching, and, to add to his misery, it was also snowing heavily.

Besides, none did even deign to talk with a coloured man, far less answer his anxious queries about the whereabouts of a hotel. Extremely hungry and physically exhausted, the Swami, who was to take the world by storm very soon in the Parliament of Religions, had no other alternative than to take shelter for the night without food in a big empty packing box in the railroad freight-yard, wherein he passed the night. When the day dawned, he got out of the packing box and, like a true Indian monk, started begging for food from door to door to satisfy his hunger. But everywhere he was hooted and insulted, and doors were slammed in his face in that land of plenty and profusion. Nothing depressed, Swamiji forged ahead, relying entirely on the Will of God ; for he fully believed that the Lord (his Master) must show him the light even in the midst of this deepening darkness. Being unable to move any longer due to sheer physical exhaustion, the Swami sat down quietly on the roadside anxiously waiting for guidance from Above. All on a sudden one regal-looking lady stepped down from the magnificent residence standing opposite to where Swamiji was seated, and asked him in a most tender voice whether he was a delegate to the Parliament of Religions. Swamiji answered in the affirmative and recounted his difficulties in the matter. She immediately took him to her house and entertained him with food and drink and assured him all possible help to facilitate his participation in the Parliament. From that very moment his benign hostess, Mrs. George W. Hale, her husband and their children became his most intimate friends. This unforeseen deliverance from this embarrassing and distressing predicament all the more strengthened his conviction that it was the Master who was testing his loyalty to him at every step and guiding him through thick and thin towards the glorious fruition of the sacred purpose for which he had journeyed to this alien land. Even while in India, Swamiji had the presentiment that it was all his Master's play in the cosmic drama of human life, and that a great stage was being prepared to bring him before the world as an exponent of Hindu thought and culture. Before embarking for America, he once said to Swami Turiyananda: "The Parliament is being organised for this (pointing to himself). My mind tells me so. You will see it materialised at no distant date". This prophecy of the Swami was now

going to be fulfilled at long last through divine dispensation. Accompanied by Mrs. Hale, the Swami went to the office of the Parliament and delivered his credentials. He was immediately accepted as a delegate and comfortably accommodated with the other Oriental delegates. Swamiji lost no time in picking up acquaintance with many distinguished personages who had come to attend the Parliament, and moved freely in the grand circle of ecclesiastics and other dignitaries who walked to and fro in the World Fair.

In the Parliament of Religions

The Parliament of Religions opened on Monday, the 11th September, 1893 at 10 a.m. in the great Hall of Columbus at the Art Institute at Chicago simultaneously with the ten strokes of the New Library Bell, each stroke indicating one of the ten chief religions of the world as listed by Charles Carrol Bonney (President of the Exposition), viz. Theism, Judaism, Mahamedanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, Catholicism, the Greek Church and Protestantism. It was indeed a unique phenomenon in the history of religions, for never before did the representatives of the world's religions gather together in one place. It was a Parliament not only of Religions but also of humanity, for here on this broad international forum one could see seated, along with the representative religious dignitaries, many of the world's greatest philosophers and scientists. It was a magnificent spectacle to see a huge mass of humanity varying from seven to ten thousand in number march almost in a military formation to their seats and join the momentous sessions of the Parliament from day to day.

In the centre sat Cardinal Gibbons, the highest prelate of the Roman Catholic Church in the Western Continent. On the right and left of him were gathered the Oriental delegates—Pratap Chandra Majumdar of Bengal and Nagarkar of Bombay, who were representatives of the Brahmo Samaj; Dharmapala, who represented the Buddhists of Ceylon; Gandhi (a distant relative of Mahatma Gandhi) representing Jainism, and Mr. Chakravarty, who represented Theosophy with Mrs. Annie Besant

Conspicuous among these Oriental delegates was Swami Vivekananda who with his noble bearing, bright countenance and gorgeous apparel and a large yellow turban, soon attracted the attention of the assembled thousands that congregated on that historic occasion. In the midst of this vast concourse of enlightened men and women, Swami Vivekananda stood up with all the dignity, grace and charm of his spiritual personality, and, bowing down to Goddess Saraswati, surveyed in a sweep the whole assembly of the great hall and addressed the distinguished gathering as "Sisters and Brothers of America."

No sooner had these words been uttered, says Dr. Barrows, the Chairman of the Committee on the Selection of Delegates, than 'there arose a peal of applause that lasted for several minutes', and the entire audience rose to their feet as a mark of appreciation of the great Swami who had cast off all formalism of the Congress and spoken to the audience in the language of their heart. The bewildered Swami could hardly realize the reason for this spontaneous outburst of joy at these simple words! When silence was restored, Swamiji at the very outset thanked the audience in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world ; in the name of the mother of religions and also in the name of the millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects. He presented Hinduism as a religion which had taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance and quoted the two following illustrative passages from the scriptures : "As the different streams having their sources in different places, all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee".^{11a} "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him ; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me."^{11b}

It was a very brief speech, but its spirit of universality and broad-mindedness coupled with the depth of his spiritual conviction captured the imagination of the delegates and threw them into an ecstasy of unprecedented delight. No doubt, Swami Vivekananda had occasions to give eleven lectures in some societies in the presence of some of the leading minds of America and to come into contact with a cross-section of American

life before joining the Parliament ; but this was in fact Swamiji's maiden speech in a distinguished gathering of such magnitude and international importance. Miss Monroe, the then Editor of *'Poetry, A Magazine of Verse'*, while recording her impressions of the Parliament of Religions and of Swamiji in her autobiography entitled *'A Poet's Life'*, has candidly stated: "The Congress of Religions was a triumph for all concerned, especially for its generalissimo the Reverend John H. Barrows of Chicago's First Presbyterian Church, who had been preparing it for two years. When he brought down his gavel upon the 'world's first parliament of religions', a wave of breathless silence swept over the audience—it seemed a great moment in human history, prophetic of the promised new era of tolerance and peace. On the stage with him, at his left, was a black-coated array of bishops and ministers representing the various Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches ; at his right a brilliant group of strangely costumed dignitaries from afar and a monk of the orange robe from Bombay. It was the last of these, Swami Vivekananda, the magnificent, who stole the whole show and captured the town. Others of the foreign groups spoke well. . . But the handsome monk in the orange robe gave us in perfect English a masterpiece. His personality, dominant, magnetic ; his voice, rich as a bronze bell ; the controlled fervour of his feeling ; the beauty of his message to the Western World he was facing for the first time—these combined to give us a rare and perfect moment of supreme emotion. It was human eloquence at its highest pitch." This resounding success of the Swami even in this opening session of the Parliament, made him one of the most popular figures in the whole assembly, and at the subsequent sessions, wrote the *Northampton Daily Herald* on April 11, 1894, "Vivekananda was not allowed to speak until the close of the programme, the purpose being to make people stay until the end of the session . . . thousands would wait for hours to hear a fifteen minutes' talk from this remarkable man."

During the seventeen sessions of the Parliament, Swami Vivekananda, in the course of his illuminating addresses, placed before the learned audience the cardinal truths of Hinduism. He said: "From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries

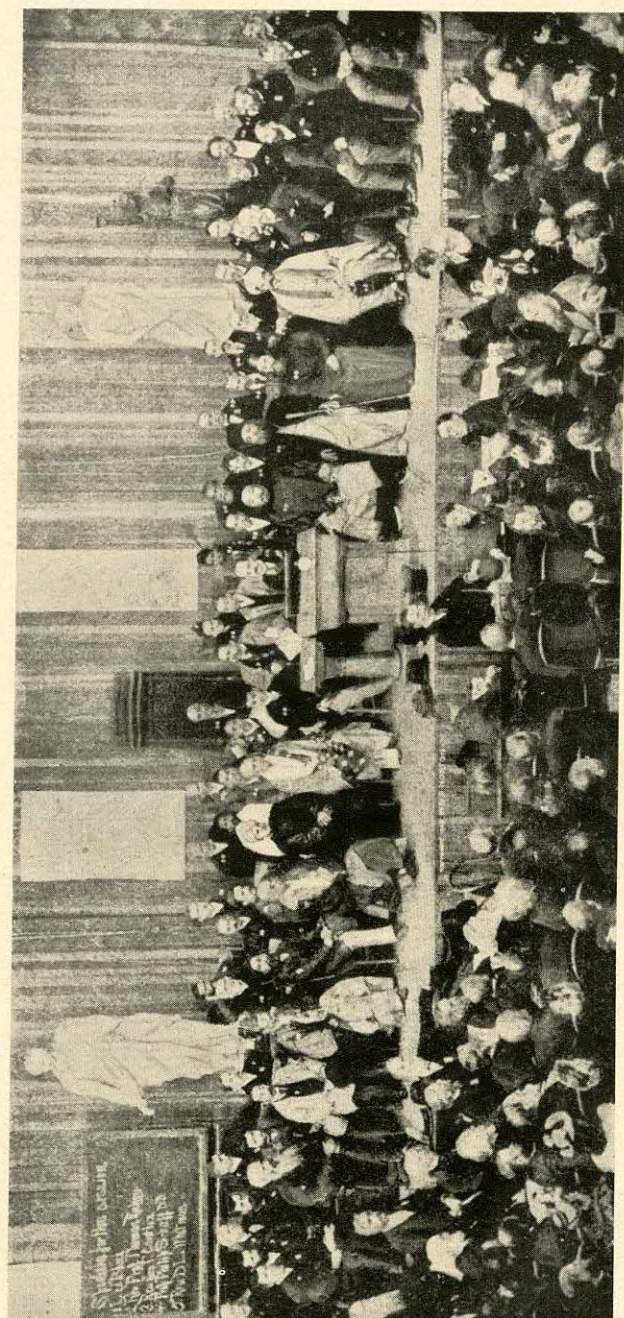
of Science seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion. . . Science is nothing but the finding of unity. As soon as science would reach perfect unity, it would stop from further progress, because it would reach the goal, and the science of religion becomes perfect when it would discover Him who is the one life in a universe of death ; Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world, One who is the only Soul of which all souls are but delusive manifestations. Thus is it, through multiplicity and duality, the ultimate unity is reached. Religion can go no further. This is the goal of all Science. . . . As we find that somehow or other, by the laws of our mental constitution, we have to associate our ideas of infinity with the image of the blue sky, or the sea, so we naturally connect our idea of holiness with the image of a church, a mosque or a cross. The Hindus have associated the ideas of holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence, and such other ideas with different images and forms. . . . If a man can realize his divine nature with the help of an image, would it be right to call that a sin? Nor, even when he has passed that stage, should he call it an error. To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him all the religions, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the Infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of these marks a stage of progress ; and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength till it reaches the Glorious Sun . . . To the Hindu, then, the whole world of religions is only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal . . . The Lord has declared to the Hindu in His incarnation as Krishna: 'I am in every religion as the thread through a string of pearls. Whenever thou seest extraordinary holiness and extraordinary power raising and purifying humanity, know thou that I am there.' . . . If there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time ; which will be infinite, like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike ; which

will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mahammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development ; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognise divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature. Offer such a religion and all nations will follow you."

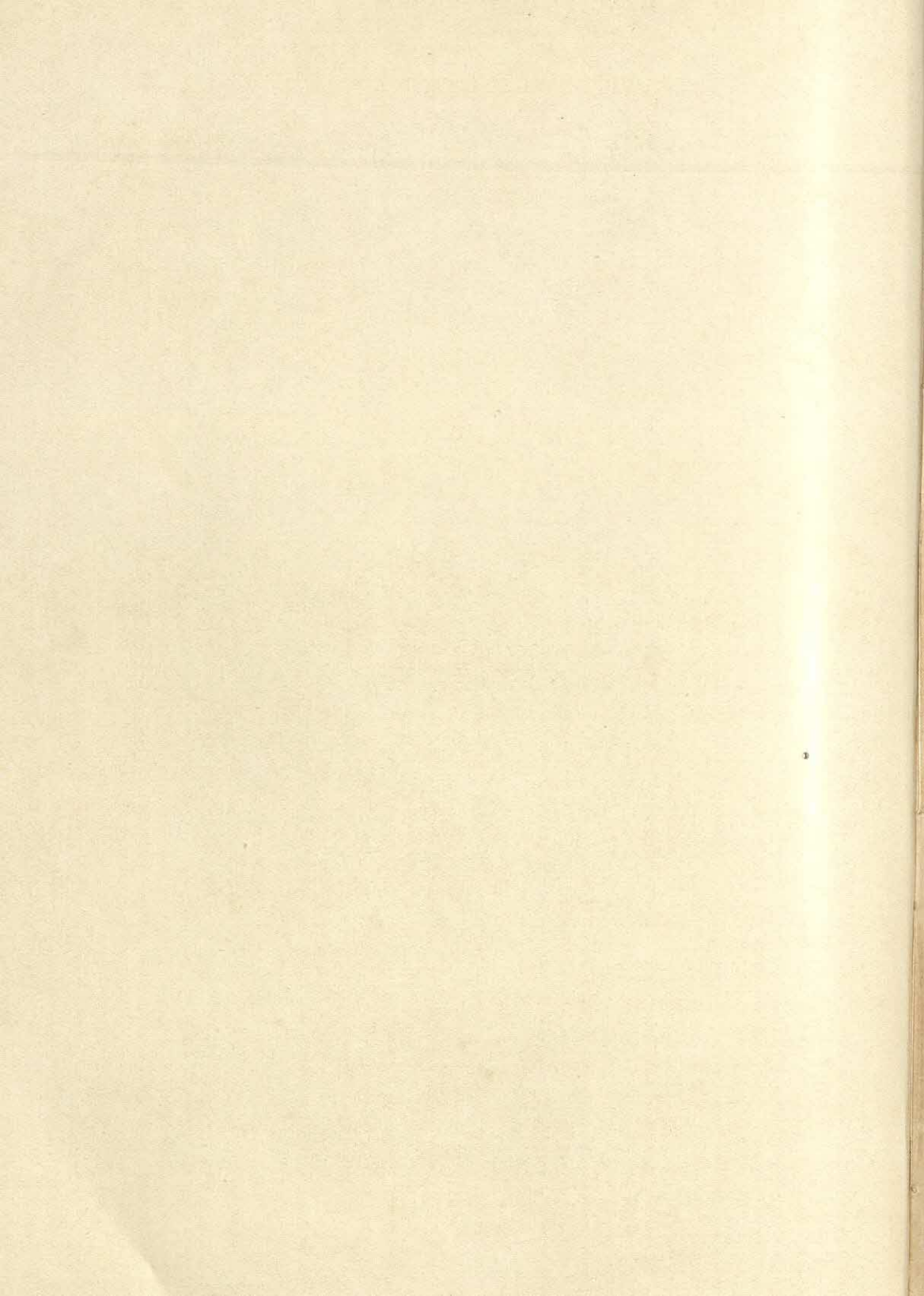
"May He who is the Brahman of the Hindus, the Ahura-Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jehovah of the Jews, the Father-in-Heaven of the Christians, give strength to you to carry out your noble idea!"

"The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. If the Parliament of religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: 'Help and not Fight', 'Assimilation and not Destruction', 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.'"

The mighty words which were addressed by the Swami to the entire humanity over the heads of the official representatives in the Parliament made a tremendous appeal to the conscience of the people at large. The obscure Hindu monk of India, who was hooted and hated in the Chicago street only a day before, blossomed forth into a world-figure almost overnight and became the Prophet of a New Dispensation. Life-size pictures of



Parliament of Religions



the Swami were hung up on the streets of Chicago. The *New York Herald*, one of the most popular and widely circulated newspapers, editorially remarked, "He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation." Though lauded up to the skies, from the platform and the press, the great Swami was not in the least puffed up with pride at this phenomenal success. For he was fully conscious that he was only an instrument in the hand of the Lord and his triumph was the triumph of Indian culture and the homage that the united nations paid to him on that memorable occasion was a spontaneous recognition of the greatness and universality of the Vedantic religion which he represented.

The news of his resounding triumph at the Parliament did not remain confined within the bounds of America, but soon reached the shores of India and was flashed in the various Indian journals and magazines from one part of the country to the other. His brother monks at the Baranagore monastery were elated with unspeakable joy to hear of the phenomenal achievement of their beloved leader in that far distant land as a literal fulfilment of Sri Ramakrishna's prophecy, "Naren shall shake the world to its foundations." The whole of India greeted with genuine pride and satisfaction the thrilling accounts of his brilliant success at the Parliament. Large and influential meetings were organized in the different parts of India, and addresses applauding his unique contribution to the cause of Hinduism in America were sent to him. Bengal did not lag behind in paying due homage to her illustrious son on this momentous occasion. The elite of the city of Calcutta organized a large representative public meeting in the Town Hall on September 5, 1894, under the presidentship of Raja Peary Mohan Mookherjee. Eminent speakers like Mr. N. N. Ghosh, Sri Surendranath Banerjee and others delivered eloquent speeches, highly eulogizing the important role played by Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions towards the dissemination of the Hindu thought and culture among the Western nations. Resolutions expressing their felicitations on the brilliant success of the Swami were adopted and conveyed to him, and hearty thanks were also tendered in the meeting to Dr. J. H. Barrows, the

Chairman, and Mr. Merwin-Marie Snell, the President of the Scientific Section of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, and also to the American people in general, for the cordial and sympathetic reception they had accorded to Swami Vivekananda. But in the midst of this universal acclamation, Swamiji could not enjoy even a modicum of mental peace. On the very day of his triumph, when he was invited by a man of affluence and distinction to his palatial building and entertained right royally and assigned for his sleep a princely room furnished with luxury, he, instead of feeling happy in this splendid environment, was extremely miserable. "As he retired the first night and lay upon his bed, the terrible contrast between poverty-stricken India and opulent America oppressed him. He could not sleep pondering over India's plight. The bed of down seemed to be a bed of thorns. The pillow was wet with his tears. He went to the window and gazed out into the darkness until he was well-nigh faint with sorrow. At length, overcome with emotion, he fell to the ground, crying out, 'O Mother, what do I care for name and fame when my motherland remains sunk in utmost poverty! To what a sad pass have we poor Indians come when millions of us die for want of a handful of rice, and here they spend millions of rupees upon their personal comfort! Who will raise the masses in India! Who will give them bread? Show me, O Mother, how I can help them'."¹² This deep love that welled up in his heart at the thought of the poor, the distressed and the despised people of India finds eloquent utterance in most of the letters he wrote from America to his disciples and admirers in India to stimulate them into a high pitch of patriotic activity. He once wrote, "I am called by the Lord for this. The hope lies in you—in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful. Feel for the miserable and look up for help—it will come. With a bleeding heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land seeking for help. The Lord will help me. I may perish of cold and hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Go down on your faces before Him and make a great sacrifice, the sacrifice of a whole life for them—these hundred millions, going down and down every day. Glory unto the Lord, we will succeed. Hundreds will fall in the struggle—hundreds will be ready to take it up. Life is nothing, death is nothing.

Glory unto the Lord—march on, the Lord is our General. Do not look back to see who falls—forward, onward!” Here in this spontaneous outpouring of his heart we get a glimpse of what Vivekananda really was—a patriot and a saint in one, a spiritual genius in whom patriotism was deified into the highest saintship, and loving service to fellowmen, into true worship; for real patriotism was with him nothing short of the transfiguration of a man’s own personality into the soul of his people, rising and sinking with them.

Before closing this chapter, we would do well to remember what Marie Louise Burke in her recently published book entitled *Swami Vivekananda in America : New Discoveries* says regarding the cause of the universal ovation accorded to the Swami on this momentous occasion. She writes : ^{12(a)} “The descriptions we have of Śwamiji at the Parliament of Religions show him as colourful and dynamic, dominating the scene with the force of his personality and the utter purity of his message. He was in the full vigor of his youth, ready to face the entire world and to sacrifice his life for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed of his motherland. And there was yet another reason for his phenomenal popularity. Never before had the people of America seen one in whom spiritual truths had been fully realized. Though the fact that Swamiji was such a one was not consciously known by the thousands who flocked to hear him speak, who waited interminable hours for even a few words and who applauded when he simply crossed the platform, the people through some inner knowledge unerringly recognized him for what he was and, from start to finish, instinctively sensed that his very presence conferred a blessing. ‘Darshan’ was unheard of in America, but here at the Parliament was a spontaneous and unconscious manifestation of the attraction of the human soul to the spiritually great.” She further adds : ^{12(b)} “It is undeniable that the American people had not been merely intellectually impressed by the nobility and supreme wisdom of Eastern doctrines which hitherto, in the words of Dr. Alfred Momaric, ‘they had been taught to regard with contempt’, but they had been touched by and had responded to the tremendous power of living spirituality that Swamiji embodied. Something far more important and more far-reaching had taken place than an intellectual appreciation of Eastern religions. It was as though

the soul of America had long asked for spiritual sustenance and had now been answered."

Work in America

During the months Swamiji stayed in Chicago after the Parliament of Religions, he was the house-guest of various friends according as situations demanded. But the members of the family of Mr. George W. Hale, Swamiji's first acquaintance in the city who had helped him to participate in the Parliament, were the most fortunate of all as Swamiji was not only their guest from time to time but he made their home his headquarters also during almost the whole of 1894 before the centre of his activities shifted eastward to the Atlantic coast. It was some time during this period that Madam Emma Calve, the celebrated songstress who had come to the city of Chicago with the Metropolitan Opera Company and was at the peak of her career, met Swamiji under a most tragic circumstance: Her only daughter on whom she lavished all her love was suddenly burned to death in the house of a friend while Calve was singing magnificently on the stage. The news was so shocking that she almost collapsed. Then came a period during which, being unable to bear this bereavement, she thrice attempted to commit suicide. But every time her attempt was foiled by an unseen hand of Providence. On the fourth day she, guided as it were by fate, inadvertently entered the house of a friend and sat in the living room in a pensive mood, when suddenly she heard a voice coming from the next room saying, "Come, my child. Don't be afraid." She got up on hearing these words of assurance and entered into the study where Swamiji was sitting behind a large table-desk. This providential meeting with the Swami was a blessing to her as his words instinct with spiritual force not only soothed her grief-stricken heart but also brought her once for all under the salutary spiritual influence of this great teacher of humanity.

Another incident of a quite different complexion occurred during this period at Chicago. John D. Rockefeller, who was subsequently regarded as one of the richest industrial magnates in America, was not at that time at the peak of his fortune. He had already heard much about the Hindu

monk from his friends and was also invited several times by them to meet Swamiji ; but for one reason or other he refused to comply with their request. "But one day although he did not want to meet Swamiji, he was pushed to it by an impulse and went directly to the house of his friends, brushing aside the butler who opened the door, and saying that he wanted to see the Hindu monk.

"The butler ushered him into the living room, and, not waiting to be announced, Rockefeller entered into Swamiji's adjoining study and was much surprised . . . to see Swamiji behind his writing table not even lifting his eyes to see who had entered.

"After a while . . . Swamiji told Rockefeller much of his past that was not known to any but himself, made him understand that the money he had already accumulated was not his, that he was only a channel and that his duty was to do good to the world—that God had given him all his wealth in order that he might have an opportunity to help and do good to people.

"Rockefeller was annoyed that anyone dared to talk to him that way and tell him what to do. He left the room in irritation, not even saying goodbye. But about a week after, again without being announced, he entered Swamiji's study and finding him the same as before, threw on his desk a paper which told of his plans to donate an enormous sum of money toward the financing of a public institution.

" 'Well, there you are', he said. 'You must be satisfied now, and you can thank me for it.'

"Swamiji didn't even lift his eyes, did not move. Then taking the paper, he quietly read it, saying, 'It is for you to thank me.' That was all. This was Rockefeller's first large donation to the public welfare."¹³

Soon after the termination of the historic sessions of the Parliament of Religions, it became the main object of Swami Vivekananda to acquaint the peoples of the West with the ideals of the civilization and the religious consciousness of his own race, to learn the secret of the material greatness of the Occident and also to collect adequate funds wherewith to provide his countrymen with scientific methods for the improvement of their economic condition. With this dual purpose in view he accepted the offer of a Lecture

Bureau and visited almost all the important cities of America from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi river such as the East and the Middle West, Chicago, Iowa, Des Moines, St. Louis, Minneapolis, Detroit, Boston, Cambridge, Baltimore, Washington, New York etc. and delivered illuminating lectures on a variety of subjects which comprised not only the history of the Indian people, the religion of the Vedanta and his future plan of work in India, but also the cardinal teachings of other leading faiths of the world and a comparative study of the cultures and civilizations of the East and the West. In the midst of this whirlwind lecture tour, he never forgot to bring into bold relief the spiritual side of his message, to widen the vision of all with whom he came into contact, and to emphasize as well the fact that though India might be seriously in need of material aid, the West stood infinitely more in need of spiritual assistance. Swamiji was at times extremely trenchant in his criticism of the Western way of life and culture and pointed out the dangers and drawbacks of the industrial civilization built on the quicksand of materialism, and also dealt smashing blows at the blind bigotry of the Christian zealots. The result was that, while the most sincere section of the Christian Society became his staunch admirers, the narrow-visioned fanatics who had neither the mind nor the intelligence to look beyond the tip of their nose, became his bitter enemies and began to calumniate him in season and out of season to lower him in the estimation of the American public. Even some of his own countrymen grew so jealous of his tremendous popularity that they also tried their best to prejudice the minds of some of the leading thinkers and savants of America against Swamiji. But the superb spiritual power, towering personality, intellectual brilliance and catholicity of outlook of the Swami bore down all opposition and nailed to the counter the sordid and mean campaign that was carried on by such wily propagandists. He soon became the centre of irresistible attraction and wheresoever he went to preach his message, he found his name blazoned in the newspapers. The *Detroit Free Press*, one of the leading journals of America, gives a glowing description of Swamiji, which is typical of what was published in other recognized papers in other cities of America. It writes: "Since the Parliament he has spoken to immense audiences in many towns and cities, who have but one

opinion of praise and are enthusiastic over his magnetic power and his way of giving light and life to every subject he touches upon. Naturally his views of great questions, coming like himself from the other side of the globe, are refreshing and stirring to American people."

Swamiji soon came to realize that the main object of the Yankee lecturing organisations was to exploit his popularity to the utmost for the purpose of earning money for themselves, as he was not paid the legitimate amount he deserved for his lectures according to the terms and conditions specified in the agreement. Out of sheer disgust he lost no time in disentangling himself at Detroit from the yoke of such binding engagements of the Lecture Bureau in 1894, though at a considerable pecuniary loss, and began to move freely and independently from place to place in delivering the spiritual goods for the enlightenment of the brothers and sisters of this alien land. In November 1894, he went from Detroit to New York where, on the occasion of his previous short visit, he had already delivered a few lectures but could not initiate any work on a permanent basis. He now thought it prudent to settle down in this most enlightened city to begin some constructive work in right earnest and cultivate intimate acquaintance with those sincere souls who would lead a life of practical spirituality according to his instructions and guidance. With this end in view he accepted an invitation from Dr. Lewis G. Janes, the then President of the Brooklyn Ethical Association, to deliver a series of lectures on the Hindu Religion before the Society. His very first lecture on the ancient religion of India made such a profound impression upon the audience that there was a pressing demand, from all sides, for the continuation of his lectures in that very Association. Regarding the effect of the lecture, the *Brooklyn Standard* wrote, "It was the voice of the ancient Rishis of the Vedas, speaking sweet words of love and toleration through the Hindu monk, Paramahansa Swami Vivekananda, that held spell-bound every one of these many hundreds who had accepted the invitation of the Brooklyn Ethical Society and packed the large lecture hall and the adjoining rooms of the Pouch Gallery on Clinton Avenue to overflowing, on the 31st December 1894. . . . Men of all professions and callings—doctors and lawyers and judges and teachers—together with many ladies, had come from all parts of the city to listen to

his strangely beautiful and eloquent defence of the Religion of India. . . . He was a splendid type of the famous sages of the Himalayas, a prophet of a new religion combining the morality of the Christians with the philosophy of the Buddhists."

Though Swamiji attained to phenomenal popularity in New York due to the series of learned lectures he delivered in the Brooklyn Society, he felt convinced that no substantial work could be built up in this country unless he were able to form an intimate circle of sincere souls who would devote themselves most seriously to the practice of the spiritual exercises which he inculcated in the course of enlightened discourses. To translate his conviction into action he settled down in a comparatively secluded part of the city and began to teach earnest-minded devotees, free of all charges. The door was kept wide open for men and women, rich and poor, high and low—without any distinction whatsoever, so that real seekers after truth belonging to the different strata of society could come into direct contact with him and profit by his spiritual talks. Very soon a brilliant group of sincere souls gathered round his magnetic personality and became inspired with the lofty spiritual ideals he placed before them. No doubt there was an insistent demand for public lectures from persons of wealth and social position, but the Swami did not respond to such invitations as he considered these class-talks more valuable and effective than mere platform speeches in moulding the lives of the genuine seekers after truth. From now on he whole-heartedly threw himself into this responsible task and began to teach them meditation and the processes of Yoga by a practical demonstration of the same along with his discourses. This had a salutary effect inasmuch as they also in their turn got necessary fillip and direction to develop a meditative habit and learn how to silence the creative ideations of the mind and to penetrate deep into the inmost recesses of the heart. Very often Swamiji himself passed into trance during these class-talks on *Yoga* and it took a long time to bring him back to normal consciousness. The whole atmosphere thus became so much surcharged with spirituality that any one who joined his classes was caught up in the current. In this way, Swamiji succeeded in creating in the new surroundings of a far-off land the stimulating atmosphere of serene peace and blessedness which prevailed in the

sacred temple garden of Dakshineswar on the bank of the Ganges during the life-time of Sri Ramakrishna, the great Master.

In this centre of activity at New York Swamiji's life was a luminous example of austere habits and strict discipline as he played the role of an Indian Yogi to stimulate in the devotees an urge for leading a life of intense spiritual culture. This served to bring about a wonderful transformation in the lives of a good number of souls who came within the ambit of his spiritual influence. Miss S. E. Waldo of Brooklyn, who became one of Swamiji's foremost disciples and well-known under the name of Sister Haridasi, gives a vivid pen-picture of how the Swami carried on his spiritual ministration silently and patiently for the benefit of those who attended his class-talks. She writes: "A few of those who had heard him in Brooklyn now began to go to the place where he lived in New York. . . . The Swami himself sat on the floor and most of his audience likewise. . . . The door was left open and the overflow filled the hall and sat on the stair. . . . The Swami, so dignified yet so simple, so gravely earnest, so eloquent, and the close ranks of students, forgetting all inconveniences, hanging breathless on his every word! . . . It was a fit beginning for a movement that has since grown to such grand proportions. In this unpretentious way did Swami Vivekananda inaugurate the work of teaching Vedanta philosophy in New York. The Swami gave his services free as air . . . The classes began in February, 1895, and lasted until June ; but long before that time they had outgrown their small beginnings and had removed downstairs to occupy an entire parlour floor and extension. The classes were held nearly every morning and on several evenings in every week. Some Sunday lectures were also given, and there were 'question' classes to help those to whom the teaching was so new and strange that they were desirous to have an opportunity for more extended explanation." In this manner the ideal of *Vedanta* in practice was planted in the soil of America and it began to take a deep root and draw real truth-seekers from the different parts of the country.

As already stated Swamiji taught the students *Raja-Yoga*, a systematic course of meditation which was supplemented by lessons on *Jnana-Yoga*. This provided the aspirant with the key to unlock the floodgate of spiri-

tuality and to attain to the realization of the supreme Reality—which, in Vedantic terminology, was Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute (*Sat-Chit-Ananda*). He, moreover, laid special emphasis on certain pre-requisites such as continence, abstemious habits, purity of life, simple *sattwika* food, physical austerities, dissociation from evil company and the like which helped forward the quick fructification of the Yogic exercises. But his training was regulated according to the particular tendency and mental make-up of every individual and as such it produced a rich harvest in the field of spiritual experiment in this foreign country. The secret of his success lay in the fact that he taught his disciples what he himself had experienced in his life of spiritual quest and that his teaching was always based more on a rational and scientific process than on the stereotyped theoretical exposition of the subject. This study circle became so popular within an incredibly short period of time that eminent physicians, physiologists and psychologists became very much interested in the *Raja-Yoga*. Swamiji's staunch devotee, Miss S. E. Waldo of Brooklyn, who acted as his amanuensis, used to note down his class-talks which were replete with the deepest philosophical insight and extraordinary outbursts of devotion, and revealed his nature as essentially a combination of the *Jnani* and *Bhakta*, the saint and true mystic in one. Swamiji collected these scattered notes kept by Miss Waldo, and edited and published them by June, 1895, in a book form called *Raja-Yoga*. The book was enthusiastically received by the American intelligentsia and the demand became so great that it ran into three editions within a few weeks of its publication. Even the eminent psychologist Prof. William James of the Harvard University got so much interested in the subject after the perusal of this treatise that he personally came to meet the great Swami at his residence at New York, became one of his ardent admirers and began to look upon him as a paragon of Vedantists. In his classical work, *The Variety of Religious Experience*, he specially refers to the Swami, while dealing with monistic mysticism. In this way many distinguished persons became his close associates, prominent amongst them being Mrs. Ole Bull, Dr. Allan Day, Miss S. E. Waldo, Professors Wyman and Wright, Dr. Street, and many clergymen and laymen of high distinction. Celebrated society people of New York such as

Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett and Miss J. MacLeod also became most intimately associated with the Swami and helped him whole-heartedly in building up his work in America. Even the great electrician Nicolas Tesla had a profound admiration for the Swami for his most rational and impressive exposition of the *Sankhya* philosophy. Like Madame Calve, the famous French actress, Sarah Bernhardt—the “Divine Sarah” as she was called—was also attracted by the sublime teachings of the philosophy which he so faithfully and eloquently expounded. Thus the tireless endeavour of the Swami, coupled with the laudable support of his rich and influential followers, enabled him to consolidate his work in America and place it on a solid foundation by the month of June, 1895. He had now the mental satisfaction that the ideals of *Sanatan Dharma*, the Eternal Religion, were silently but surely seeping into the thought-world of America and bringing about a marvellous change in the outlook of the enlightened people of the country. But the Swami, in spite of his indomitable will and vigour, began to feel worried and jaded, and his physical frame, which had been brought almost to the breaking point due to this unceasing mental and intellectual strain, needed complete rest and recuperation for a more serious work in store for him in other parts of the Christian world. Very soon he got an invitation from Miss Dutcher, one of his students, to live in a small cottage at Thousand Island Park, the largest island in the St. Lawrence River, and accepted it gladly as this would afford him an opportunity not only to give some rest to his tired limbs but also to provide a suitable and congenial forum for those who would devote themselves whole-heartedly to the study of the *Vedanta* and mould their lives in the light of its lofty teachings. The cottage was ideally situated, being perched on a tableland overlooking a wide sweep of the beautiful river with many of its far-famed Thousand Islands, and gradually sloping down towards the shores of the river. The stillness of this sequestered place, screened from public view by thick woods, the idyllic beauty of the sylvan area, the melodious warblings of sweet-toned birds, the gentle murmur of the green leaves of trees and the soft silvery rays of the moon occasionally illumining this scene of enchantment, converted the locality into an earthly paradise. In this much coveted solitude the great Teacher spent seven weeks with his devoted students who

were deeply inspired by listening to the pregnant lessons of their spiritual preceptor. Miss S. E. Waldo, who also accompanied the Swami, while giving a vivid pen-picture of the Teacher and his stay in the Thousand Island Park, writes: ¹⁴

"It was a perpetual inspiration to live with a man like Swami Vivekananda. From morning till night it was ever the same, we lived in constant atmosphere of intense spirituality. Often playful and fun-loving, full of merry jest and quick repartee, he was never for a moment far from the dominating note of his life. Everything could furnish a text or an illustration, and in a moment we would find ourselves swept from amusing tales of Hindu mythology to the deepest philosophy. The Swami had an inexhaustible fund of mythological lore and surely no race is more abundantly supplied with myths than those ancient Aryans. He loved to tell them to us and we were delighted to listen, for he never failed to point out the reality hidden under myth and story and to draw from it valuable spiritual lessons. Never had fortunate students greater cause to congratulate themselves on having so gifted a Teacher!

"By a singular coincidence just twelve students followed the Swami to Thousand Island Park, and he told us that he accepted us as real disciples and that was why he so constantly and freely taught us, giving us his best. All the twelve were not all together at once, ten being the largest number present at any time. Two of our members subsequently became Sannyasins. . . . On the occasion of the consecration of the second Sannyasin, the Swami initiated two of us as Brahmacharins."

The silent but eventful weeks from the 19th June to the 6th August spent in that beautiful Island in the company of a devoted batch of Christian students form one of the most thrilling episodes in the history of Swamiji's work in America. The disciples of their own accord divided amongst themselves all the household works which they performed with unabating zeal and in a spirit of self-dedication and worshipful service. From day to day they were treated to the dainty delicacies of spiritual talks and discourses and were taken through a prescribed programme of meditation, study and prayer for their spiritual unfoldment. They also listened with rapt attention to the outpourings of his own spirit which was

in constant communion with the Highest. The subjects dealt with during his stay in this peaceful retreat were gleaned from the sacred books of the East such as the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Upanishads* and *Brahma-Sutras* of Vyasa, and he presented with as much lucidity as possible the various systems of Indian philosophy including the Dualism (*Dwaita*) of Sri Madhva, qualified non-dualism (*Visistadwaita*) of Sri Ramanuja, and the absolute monism (*Advaita*) of Sri Sankara. Besides, he presented to them for the first time a vivid picture of his own *Guru* Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, one of the greatest incarnations of the world, his spiritual austerities and practice of all the leading faiths of mankind, harmonization of the apparently contradictory systems of thought and also his universality of outlook on life. He narrated at the same time his own incessant struggle for the realization of the Highest Truth in the sacred temple-garden of Dakshineswar at the feet of this great Master. An atmosphere similar to what prevailed in Dakshineswar was created here also by Swamiji in this lonely retreat by releasing from day to day a cascade of divine ecstasy which swept the souls of the devotees that gathered round his charming personality. The Swami threw light upon all manner of subjects, historical and philosophical, spiritual and temporal, and it seemed as if the contents of nature were pouring themselves forth as a grand revelation of the many-sidedness of the Eternal Truth. We find today glimpses of some of these inspired utterances of the great Swami in the form of a book known as *The Inspired Talks*. It was due to the sedulous care and industry of Miss Waldo that these highly enlightened talks had been preserved for the benefit and guidance of all spiritual aspirants.

The object of Swamiji 'to manufacture a few Yogis out of the materials of the classes' during this brief period of residence in this island retreat was fulfilled in a large measure. His profound teachings and dynamic spiritual personality left an indelible impress upon the minds of this fortunate group of devotees. Most of them gathered from the gospel of this great Teacher abundant spiritual viaticum for their arduous journey in life and devoted themselves to the practice of meditation under his inspiring guidance. One day the great Swami himself passed into the *nirvikalpa samadhi* here on the banks of the St. Lawrence as he did in the holy garden of Cossi-

pore by the side of the Ganges. It was here in this inspiring atmosphere that he penned his famous poem *The Song of the Sannyasin*—a poetical masterpiece which is vibrant with a resounding note of renunciation and deep spiritual fervour and also gives a glimpse of the depth of his *Advaita* realization.

Scarcely had he thus finished the responsible task of training a band of devoted selfless workers, when he received an invitation from Miss Henrietta Müller to be her guest in London. Mr. E. T. Sturdy, who had previously practised severe austerities in the Himalayas and had long been intimately acquainted with Indian thought and culture, extended to the Swami a similar cordial invitation to live with him in London. This offered the Swami a golden opportunity to carry the message of the *Vedanta* also to the enlightened society of England. Considering this to be a call from the Most High, he soon returned from the Island to New York and after entrusting his nascent work in America to a group of trained adherents, sailed for England in the middle of August, 1895. But as the newly planted sapling of *Vedanta* work in the soil of America needed tender care and nourishment at his own hands for its steady growth and development, Swamiji had to come back to New York after a brief stay in England and he resumed his preaching work in America with the renewed vigour and zeal of a martyr.

During the absence of Swami Vivekananda in England, the work in America, which had been built up after a good deal of struggle and sacrifice, was managed with conspicuous success by some of his most devoted western disciples, such as Swamis Kripananda and Abhayananda and Miss S. E. Waldo, who not only conducted the weekly *Vedanta* classes regularly but carried the message of their Master to the various cities of the Union. Their work was highly appreciated by the educated public and as a result two new centres grew up,—one at Buffalo and the other at Detroit where the work of spreading the message of *Vedanta* was enthusiastically carried on by the earnest seekers of truth. Swamiji, on his return from England on December 6, 1895, decided to close his public lectures and to organise the *Vedanta* movement into a definite society. But before he could translate this idea into action, he had to respond to the insistent demand for public lectures in some of the important centres of learning. At Madison Square

Garden he delivered, on February 24, a very inspiring lecture on *My Master* which is an eloquent and glorious tribute to his great spiritual preceptor. Only a few days before this memorable public lecture, a group of young men and women took *mantras* from him, and Dr. Street, a devout disciple of Swamiji, was initiated into *sannyasa* by him and given the name of Swami Yogananda. The very fact that even in this foreign land and in the thick of alien culture the ideal of renunciation, chastity and poverty was embraced by persons of learning, position and culture, indubitably proved that human nature was the same everywhere and it needed only favourable circumstances and spiritual fillip for its unfoldment and healthy evolution. On March 25, he was invited to speak before the graduate students of the Philosophy Department of the Harvard University on the *Philosophy of the Vedanta*. His lecture created such a profound impression upon the minds of the professors that he was offered even a Chair of Eastern Philosophy in the University. He was also invited to accept the Chair of Sanskrit in the Columbia University. But as a *sannyasin* he could not accept them and so he declined the offers with thanks. As contemplated before, he now closed his public lectures in New York and began to issue his teachings in book forms. Thus "The Vedanta Society of New York"—a non-sectarian body with the distinct purpose of preaching and practising the *Vedanta* and applying its principles to all religions—came into existence with toleration and acceptance of all religions as its watchwords. People belonging to the various religious creeds and organizations were cordially invited to enlist themselves as members of the Society without change of faith. This catholicity of spirit and universality of outlook had a tremendous appeal to the real truth-seekers who enthusiastically rallied under the banner of this universal ideal of the *Vedanta* at the New York Centre. His religious treatises such as the *Raja-Yoga*, *Bhakti-Yoga* and *Karma-Yoga*, which had already seen the light of the day, aroused a considerable interest amongst the great savants and thinkers of America and helped forward the dissemination of his spiritual ideas and ideals in this foreign land.

One of the principal objects of Swamiji in organizing a Vedanta Society in New York was to open a suitable centre for an exchange of ideas

between the East and the West for the well-being of both. It was his settled conviction that the science of the West and the philosophy of the East must shake hands with each other ; for, in the ultimate analysis the two meet at a point where humanity stands as one indivisible entity. He averred that Science coupled with *Vedanta* was the ideal of future humanity. Swamiji was however conscious that to make the lofty spiritual ideas of the Hindu religious lore easily acceptable to the Western world, they should be interpreted in a most rationalistic and scientific way. He therefore felt the need of a thorough reorganisation of the religio-philosophical thought of India if it was to regain its conquering force and penetrate deep into the core of the Western life and fertilize the soil of Occidental culture. Already he had in his mind a plan of bringing from India some of his monastic brother disciples to impart religious teaching to the American people and of sending in return some of his trained and devout American and English disciples to India to give the Indians practical training in Science and applied Sociology, Economics and Industry, and in the ideas of organisation and co-operation. The Swami would very often tell his American followers with the bold conviction of a seer that time was not far distant when the lines of demarcation both in thought and ideal between the East and the West would be completely obliterated and the two ends would meet in a spirit of harmonious co-operation to evolve a newer type of civilization and culture for the good of humanity at large. Swamiji now intended to undertake a second trip to England to consolidate and intensify his newly started work among the Englishmen. Keeping in view that his American work might not suffer a set-back during his absence, he made Mr. Francis H. Leggett, one of the rich and influential residents of the city, the President of the Vedanta Society, and his initiated disciples were put in charge of other offices of the centre. After having completed this arrangement for the smooth working of the Society and the efficient management of its incipient activities, the Swami sailed on April 15 for England where he carried on his Vedantic activity till the end of July, 1896. Thus "surveying the history of his work, one sees the Swami Vivekananda moving through the West as some mighty, glorious and effulgent light. A Plato in thought, a modern Savonarola in his fearless outspokenness, and

adored as a Master and as a Prophet, the Swami moved amongst his disciples as some great Bodhisattva amongst his devotees. Some looked upon him even as a Buddha, others as a Christ, some as a Rishi of the Upanishads, whilst others as a Sankaracharya ; and all regarded him as the embodiment of the Highest Consciousness . . . The Swami Vivekananda lives in the memory of America as the Man with a Message for the West, 'one who walked with God'."¹⁵

Work in England

As already stated, what with an urgent need to recoup his health seriously undermined by his ceaseless activity in America, and what with an inner urge to carry to the British intelligentsia the same message of *Vedanta* which had awakened the foremost thinkers and cultured men and women of America to a new order of thought and a new spiritual outlook, Swamiji journeyed through the continent of Europe to England where he stayed three times during the whole course of his first tour in the West i.e. from September to the end of November, 1895, from April to the end of July, 1896, and again from October to December 16, 1896, after his short continental tour. The sea voyage served as a restorative to his failing health and exhausted brain and his short stay in Paris, the hub of European culture, offered him a very good opportunity to know much of the highly artistic instincts of the French people. He furthermore became acquainted with some enlightened personages and held illuminating discourses with them on subjects ranging from the highest spiritual to the most learned studies. Thus he utilized this occasion in carefully studying and observing with his eagle-eye the cultural life of the West.

Immediately on his arrival in London, he was cordially received by Mr. E. T. Sturdy and Miss Henrietta Müller. Very soon his friends and admirers arranged evening classes and talks in private houses. But these classes became so popular and attractive that they could not be kept limited to a small group of people. Numerous distinguished visitors including Lady Isabel Margesson and several of the nobility began to seek interviews and crowded into his class rooms to listen to his inspiring discourses. The

representatives of the leading journals like *The Westminster Gazette* and *The Standard* publicised his learned talks in the editorial columns and thus made Swamiji the focus of attention of the persons of light and leading in London. The preliminary spade-work having thus been accomplished with unexpected success, Swamiji, in response to the requests of his friends, delivered a public lecture on the evening of October 22, at Princes' Hall, Piccadilly, one of the most fashionable places in the metropolis of London. In appreciation of the lecture which was a tremendous success, *The Standard* wrote: "Since the days of Ram Mohan Roy, with the single exception of Keshub Chandra Sen, there has not appeared on an English platform a more interesting Indian figure than the Hindu who lectured in Princes' Hall . . . In the course of his lecture, he made remorselessly disparaging criticism on the work that factories, engines, and other inventions and books were doing for man, compared with half-a-dozen words spoken by Buddha or Jesus. The lecture was evidently quite extemporaneous and was delivered in a pleasing voice free from any kind of hesitation."

Swamiji's expectation was more than fulfilled. His misgiving that the preaching work of a Hindu monk hailing from a subject race in the land of the ruling power would not receive as cordial a reception as it had done in America was dispelled in no time. The Press welcomed his religious and philosophical ideas which were based mainly on the universal principles of the *Vedanta* and the *Gita*; some of the most enlightened clubs of the city and even leaders of its prominent educational institutions invited him and received him with marked admiration. In short, he occupied very soon a position of honour in the best circles of English society and the members of the nobility were glad to reckon him as their friend. A correspondent of a daily journal who attended the class lectures of the Swami writes: "It is indeed a rare sight to see some of the most fashionable ladies in London seated on the floor cross-legged, of course for want of chairs, listening with all the *bhakti* of an Indian *chela* towards his *Guru*. The love and sympathy for India that the Swamiji is creating in the minds of the English-speaking race is sure to be a tower of strength for the progress of India." The spontaneous response his message thus received in England brought about a complete change in his idea of the British public. He himself proclaim-

ed with superb frankness after his return to India: "No one ever landed on English soil with more hatred in his heart for a race than I did for the English. . . There is none among you. . . who loves the English people more than I do now. . . " He soon realized that a cultural conquest of the British would create an excellent opening for the spread of India's spiritual and cultural heritage all over the world. So he subsequently wrote in a letter to Mr. Francis Leggett in America on July 6, 1896: "The British Empire with all its drawbacks is the greatest machine that ever existed for the dissemination of ideas. I mean to put my ideas in the centre of this machine and they will spread all over the world."

It was during his first visit to England that Miss Margaret Noble (afterwards known as Sister Nivedita) came into personal touch with this great Hindu monk. She was the Headmistress of a school and an important member of the Sesame Club founded for the furtherance of educational purposes. She moved in quiet but highly intellectual circles and was deeply interested in all modern influences and thought. It is worth while to reproduce here a few lines from her monumental work *The Master as I saw Him* about her first meeting with the Swami. She says: ". . . the time was a cold Sunday afternoon in November, and the place, it is true, a West-end drawing room. But he was seated facing a half-circle of listeners, with the fire on the hearth behind him . . . Never again in England did I see the Swami as a teacher in such simple fashion. Later, he was always lecturing, or the questions he answered were put with formality by members of larger audiences. Only this first time we were but fifteen or sixteen guests, intimate friends, many of us, and he sat amongst us, in his crimson robe and girdle, as one bringing us news from a far land, with a curious habit of saying now and again 'Siva! Siva!' and wearing that look of mingled gentleness and loftiness, that one sees on the faces of those who live much in meditation, that look, perhaps, that Raphael has painted for us, on the brow of the Sistine Child."¹⁶ This first meeting with Swamiji, her future spiritual *Guru*, left on her mind an indelible impression of the profound sanctity and purity of the life and message of this great Mastermind, and Miss Noble did not from now miss an opportunity to attend Swamiji's thrilling and interesting lectures and talks. As a matter

of fact, the novelty and breadth of his religious culture and the intellectual freshness of his philosophical outlook coupled with his stirring call in the name of all that is holy and healthy made an irresistible appeal to the inquisitive mind and the fervid imagination of this highly gifted girl. The more intimately did she mix with the Swami, the greater light did she get in the solution of the manifold problems which were crowding in her mind from day to day. Thus in the course of three months which Swamiji spent on this occasion of his first visit to England, he succeeded in conquering the hearts of many enlightened persons of high eminence, distinguished educationists and even learned clericals and church dignitaries. Mr. E. T. Sturdy, writing to the *Brahmavadin* in the month of February, 1896, about the Swami's visit to England, says: "The visit of the Swami Vivekananda to England has demonstrated that there exists a thoughtful, educated body of people here, which has only to be found and properly approached, to benefit very largely from the life-giving stream of Indian thought."

Swamiji had to return to America in response to an urgent call from the members of the Vedanta Society at New York where his presence became an indispensable necessity to meet the pressing spiritual needs of the people. So, advising the most intimate group of persons to form themselves into a body and to regularly meet together and read the *Bhagavad Gita* and other Hindu scriptures, Swamiji left for New York to allow the seeds sown in the soil of London time to germinate.

After consolidating his work in New York Swamiji came back to London for the second time on April 15, 1896, and was extremely delighted to see his brother monk Swami Saradananda there as the guest of Mr. E. T. Sturdy. He had reached London from Calcutta on April 1, 1896, according to the express desire of Swamiji to take up the thread of work already started by him in England. Swamiji heard from him with absorbing interest all particulars about the monastery in Alambazar and also listened to a detailed account of what his brother monks were doing in India. On the other hand, he communicated to Saradananda all that had hitherto been done through the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master, in America and England, and also disclosed with apostolic fervour his future

plans of work in India and abroad. Both of them now resided in St. George's Road as the guests of Miss Müller and Mr. Sturdy, and very shortly persons of distinction, students of comparative religion and many earnest seekers after truth began to frequent their quarters to learn the various forms of *Yoga*, and to study the problem of human life in their light.

Swamiji soon began his regular classes on *Jnana Yoga* (the Path of Wisdom). His Sunday lectures comprised such subjects as 'The Necessity of Religion', 'A Universal Religion', 'The Real and the Apparent Man', 'Renunciation', 'Realization', and the like which strongly appealed to the intellectually gifted people of England and prepared the ground for a steady march of Hindu thought and culture throughout the length and breadth of the country. Swami Vivekananda's brilliant exposition of Hindu ideas and ideals, lucid treatment of Christian theology and teachings of Lord Jesus, as also his critical analysis of the drawbacks of Western culture and industrial civilization, drew unstinted admiration from the cream of the cultured society of England. His learned lecture on Education at the Sesame Club was a masterpiece of eloquence and was an eye-opener to many intellectuals who posed themselves as leaders in the field of education. They discovered a deeper significance in Swamiji's definition of education as the manifestation of the perfection already in man, and began from now to tackle the problem of child education from a new angle of vision. Miss Margaret E. Noble, who was the convener of the meeting, was so much impressed by Swamiji's illuminating dissertation on Education at the Club that she felt a greater urge to gather more light from the Swami not only on matters educational but also on the various complex problems of her own life.

During his stay in London, he met the celebrated Indologist, Professor Max Müller of the Oxford University, by special invitation, at his residence on May 28, 1896. Swamiji was deeply impressed to see the profundity of the scholarship of the great orientalist. Swamiji himself wrote to the *Brahmavadin* on June 6, as follows: "What an extraordinary man is Professor Max Müller! I paid a visit to him a few days ago. I should say, that I went to pay my respects to him, for whosoever loves Sri Ramakrishna, whatever be his or her sect, or creed, or nationality, my visit to

that person I hold as a pilgrimage. . . The visit was really a revelation to me. That nice little house, its setting of a beautiful garden, the silver-headed sage, with a face calm and benign, and forehead smooth as a child's in spite of seventy winters, and every line in that face speaking of a deep-seated mine of spirituality somewhere behind ; . . . the trees, the flowers, the calmness, and the clear sky—all these sent me back in imagination to the glorious days of ancient India, the days of our *Brahmarshis* and *Rajarshis*. It was neither the philologist nor the scholar that I saw, but a soul that is every day realizing its oneness with the Brahman, a heart that is every moment expanding to reach the oneness with the Universal. . . And what love he bears towards India! I wish I had a hundredth part of that love for my own motherland. Endued with an extraordinary, and, at the same time, an intensely active mind, he has lived and moved in the world of Indian thought for fifty years or more, and watched the sharp interchange of light and shade in the interminable forest of Sanskrit literatures with deep interest and heart-felt love, till they have all sunk into his very soul and coloured his whole being. Max Müller is a Vedantist of Vedantists. . . .”

The Professor, who had already gathered some facts about the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna from India and written a pamphlet entitled *A Real Mahatman*, was now extremely anxious after his talk with Swamiji to know more about the Master so as to bring out a larger and fuller account of his life and gospels. Swamiji at once commissioned Swami Saradananda to collect from India greater details regarding the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. The materials, thus gathered, were placed at the disposal of the learned Professor who set to work at once and embodied them in a book which was published under the title *The Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna*. Needless to point out that this treatise, coming as it did from the powerful pen of a scholar of the eminence of Max Müller, created a great sensation in England and materially helped the Swami in carrying on his mission in the English-speaking world with greater ease and success.

Swami Vivekananda's second visit to England was memorable for another reason. He was able to gather to his fold some most diligent and

devout workers who proved martyrs to his noble cause. As already stated, the Swami had intimate acquaintance during his first visit with Miss Henrietta Müller, Miss Margaret E. Noble, Mr. E. T. Sturdy and others. They now became his disciples, ready to sacrifice everything for their spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda in his effort to spread the mission of the *Vedanta*. Very soon a devoted couple, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, who were earnest students of religion and sought for the Highest Truth in various sects and creeds in vain, came to meet the "Indian Yogi" to satisfy their spiritual hunger. Their joy knew no bounds when after their talk with the Swami they found in him the man and the philosophy they had been seeking all through their lives. At the very first meeting, Swamiji addressed Mrs. Sevier as "Mother", and from that day the couple looked upon the Swami not only as their *Guru* but also as their son. Thus from the land of the ruling people were presented to the great Swami four most valuable gifts in the person of Sister Nivedita, J. J. Goodwin and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier who consecrated their lives to the service of India.

Trip to the Continent

The nerve-racking exertions which the Swami made in his supreme effort to place his work on a sound basis in England made it absolutely necessary for him to get away for the time being from the crowded life of activity into the salubrious atmosphere of some hilly region. Accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Sevier and Miss Henrietta Müller, Swamiji started towards the end of July, 1896, for a short trip to the Continent. The party soon reached Switzerland which became the greatest attraction for Swamiji as its snow-covered high hills, the beautiful villages on the mountain-sides, the industrious peasantry, the bracing climate and the silent atmosphere reminded him all at once of the sky-kissing Himalayas—the beauty spot of India. The Swami was at his best when he came to a village nestling in the Alps. It was here that he enjoyed some of the most luminous spiritual moments of his life in the midst of the uplifting silence of the scene that was not disturbed in the least by the din and

bustle of the madding crowd's ignoble strife. Swamiji felt completely refreshed by his two weeks' stay in this delightful lap of the Alps. It was here in the solitude of the hills that Swamiji first expressed his desire to build up in the bosom of his beloved Himalayas a monastery where his Indian and Western disciples would live together and carry on spiritual practices and from where trained Indian workers would go out as preachers of *Vedanta* to the West, and the Western disciples would devote their lives to the good of India. The idea, though casually vented by the Swami, sank so deep into the hearts of the Sevier couple that they did not rest content till the scheme did actually materialize. Swamiji unexpectedly received an urgent letter from the illustrious Orientalist, Paul Deussen, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kiel in Germany, inviting him most cordially to his place. Prof. Deussen, who had very recently returned from his Indian tour, soon became acquainted with the lectures and utterances of the Swami, and having found in him an original thinker and a spiritual genius, felt a strong desire to meet him to discuss intricate philosophical problems with him.

On his way to Kiel, he visited Heidelberg, Coblenz, the centre of one of the greatest Universities, Cologne and the great city of Berlin, and was highly impressed to see the material greatness and the learning of the people of Germany. On his arrival at the Professor's residence in Kiel, the Swami was cordially received by the learned Professor. Mrs. Sevier gives an interesting account of this eventful meeting as follows: ". . . After a few preliminary enquiries regarding the travels and plans of Swamiji, I noticed the Professor directing his eyes to some volumes lying open on the table, and with a scholar's appreciation of learning, he soon turned the conversation on books . . . He considered the system of the Vedanta as founded on the Upanishads and Vedanta Sutras, with Sankaracharya's commentaries, some of the most majestic structures and valuable products of the genius of man in his search for truth, and that the highest and purest morality is the immediate consequence of the Vedanta. . . " "It seems," the Professor added, "that a movement is being made back towards the fountain-head of spirituality, a movement that will, in the future, probably make India, the spiritual leader of the nations, the highest and greatest

spiritual influence on earth. . . ” Due to urgent calls from London Swamiji could not prolong his stay at Kiel in spite of the repeated requests of Prof. Deussen. It was therefore arranged that the latter would meet him at Hamburg and proceed with the Swami to London. After reaching this destination, Prof. Deussen was accommodated in the house of one of his friends in St. John's Wood, while the Swami lived with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier in their house in Hampstead. For two whole weeks during his stay in London, Prof. Deussen frequently visited Swamiji and held discussions on the most recondite principles of the *Vedanta* which enabled him to have a much clearer conception of the whole system of *Vedanta* philosophy. He was convinced that a person who wants to go deeper into the very core of Indian philosophy must divest himself of all preconceived notions and then come to grips with the lofty philosophical system of the Hindus.

It is to be noted that the Swami, after giving necessary instruction to Swami Saradananda in the matter of preaching work, had already sent him at the end of June, 1896, to New York in the company of Mr. J. J. Goodwin. Within a few days of his arrival there Swami Saradananda made a very favourable impression upon the disciples and students of *Vedanta* in America by his eloquent lectures on Indian philosophy and interesting classes on the *Yoga* Systems. This news of the success of his brother disciple in America delighted Swami Vivekananda beyond measure as he was satisfied that the work he had initiated in America was now safe in the hands of Saradananda who was quite competent to carry on the *Vedanta* work with confidence and success there.

As days rolled on, the general public in England became more and more enthusiastic to listen to the learned lectures of Swamiji which now mostly covered the philosophical portions of the *Vedanta* known as *Jnana-Yoga*. “Extraordinarily equipped as he was to garb the greatest metaphysical truths in a poetic language of wonderful depth and profundity, he made the dizzy heights of *Advaita* appear like a land rich with the verdure of noblest human aspiration and fragrant with the flowers of finest emotions. The tremendous power of his personality behind his

utterances, made every word fall like a thunderbolt upon his audience."¹⁷ The effect of lectures covering a wide range of subjects was so deep and penetrating that, besides those already referred to, many other celebrities including Mr. Frederick H. Myers, the well-known author of several psychological works, Höpfs, the non-conformist minister, Mr. Moncure D. Conway, the positivist and peace advocate, Mr. Edward Carpenter, the author of *Towards Democracy*, Canon Wilberforce, the great orator, also became very much interested in Indian thought and culture. His mental strain was, however, greatly relieved when he soon found by his side his brother-monk, Swami Abhedananda, who had just arrived from India at the urgent call of the Swami to assist him in his London work. Swamiji began to train him as assiduously as he had trained Swami Saradananda, so that he might carry the burden on his shoulders with good cheer and confidence even in his absence. And his joy knew no bounds when he saw Swami Abhedananda acquit himself most creditably in his maiden speech on the *Vedanta* at a club in Bloomsbury Square, on October 27, 1896. "It was the joy," to quote Mr. Eric Hammond, "of a spiritual father over the achievement of a well-beloved son, a successful and brilliant student." Swamiji instinctively felt sure, "even if I perish on this plane my message will be sounded through these dear lips and the world will hear it. . . ."

Reports began to pour in from New York that Swami Saradananda with his organising ability and wonderful capacity for conducting classes had proved a grand success in America and that the sphere of Vedantic influence was steadily expanding from day to day under the aegis of the Vedanta Society established at New York. Swamiji being now confident that the Vedantic movement set on foot both in America and England would not suffer any set-back in his absence, began seriously to think of returning to the sacred soil of his motherland at the earliest opportunity to begin his contemplated work in India with the help and co-operation of his foreign disciples. Towards the middle of November (1896) Swamiji, after a class lecture, all on a sudden asked Mrs. Sevier to purchase four tickets immediately to avail themselves of the most convenient steamer from Naples. As Mr. and Mrs. Sevier were mentally prepared and anxious

to go to India to lead the *Vanaprastha* life and help the Swami as far as practicable in his work in India, they accelerated their preparations and eventually secured berths on the steamer *Printz Regent Luitpold* which was to leave Naples for Ceylon on December 16. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier disposed of all their belongings and placed at the disposal of their Master the whole of the sale-proceeds. Thus freed from all tentacles of domestic ties, they kept themselves ready for the voyage to India. Besides the Sevier couple, Swamiji's devoted disciple and personal attendant and Secretary, Mr. Goodwin, was also to accompany him. Moreover, Swamiji contemplated to take to India later on other English and American lady disciples who would dedicate themselves to the furtherance of the cause of education for Indian womanhood. On the eve of his departure from England, the friends and followers of Swamiji organised a farewell meeting on December 13 at the Royal Society of Painters in Water-colours in Piccadilly. Mr. E. T. Sturdy, the Chairman of the meeting, presented an address of farewell to the Swami. Touching references were made by men and women in the course of their parting speeches to the esteem and affection Swamiji had won from all. Many hearts became sad and many eyes became laden with tears to think of their imminent separation from their beloved friend, philosopher and guide. Swamiji reciprocated their sentiments and replied in terms of great affection and glowing spiritual fervour. He assured them that wherever he might be, he would never cease to work for them and help them until all came to realize the Highest Truth. Leaving Swami Abhedananda in charge of the *Vedanta* work in England, the Swami bade adieu to London on December 16, and started for the Continent in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, while Mr. Goodwin sailed from Southampton to meet the party at Naples. Just before his departure for India, an English friend incidentally put the poser to the Swami: "Swami, how do you like your motherland now after four years' experience of the luxurious, glorious, powerful West?" The great patriot-saint of India replied with his characteristic frankness and the emphasis he could command: "India I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy, it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the

tirtha!" A worthy utterance from the lips of a worthy son of mother India indeed!

Back to the Motherland

The party, after crossing the English Channel, travelled by train through France to Milan in Italy. Swamiji was immensely delighted to see some of the remnants of the ancient glories of the Holy Roman Empire still in existence in such great cities as Milan, Pisa and Florence. Thereafter he proceeded to Rome, the famous imperial city, where he spent about a week in visiting almost all the places of historical importance, including the palaces of the Caesars, the Forum, the Palatine Hill, the Temple Vesta, the Colosseum, the Capitoline Hill, the Vatican etc. These monumental achievements of the once mighty Roman rulers brought before his imagination the whole history of the Roman empire from the heyday of its power to the days of its decline. The itinerary did not permit him to prolong his stay in this magnificent capital city. On his way to Naples, Swamiji however had an opportunity to see the famous crater Vesuvius and the city of Pompeii, and also the Museum and the Aquarium which greatly attracted the attention of the party.

As scheduled, the steamer arrived at Naples from Southampton, bringing Mr. Goodwin as one of its passengers, and Swamiji, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, embarked the ship which left the shores of Italy for Colombo on December 30, 1896. The home-coming of Swamiji was an event of great historical importance, heralding the dawn of an unprecedented spiritual resurgence in India. The news of his prospective return had already spread like wildfire throughout the length and breadth of India. The whole country was maddened with enthusiasm to accord a right royal reception to the heroic son of India who was returning adorned with an aureole of unique glory, for his resounding victory at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago and also for his signal success in the whirlwind activities carried on with so much assiduity and self-dedication for the dissemination of the lofty ideals of *Vedanta* for about four years throughout the whole civilized world of the West. The entire sub-continent of India rose to a man as it were to receive back with honour and gratitude her worthy

son, who only a few years back was an obscure *Sannyasin* travelling penniless and bare-footed from the foot of the snow-capped Himalayas to Cape Comorin with only a begging bowl in hand. Nobody did ever dream that such an unknown son of the soil would all on a sudden burgeon forth into a world figure and occupy the most dignified position of a spiritual teacher in an incredibly short period of time both in India and abroad. But Swamiji, whose name had already become a household word in India and thrilled his countrymen into white heat of admiration, was quite ignorant of the tremendous preparations that were going on to welcome him in the land of his birth.

The ship *Printz Regent Luitpold*, with the victorious Swami and his beloved disciples on board, soon steamed near the coast of Ceylon in the early hours of January 15, 1897, and the Swami was filled with an ineffable joy to see after such a long period of separation the beautiful face of his beloved motherland shining in the roseate hues of the rising sun. Immediately on his arrival at the Colombo Port, he was greeted with deafening jubilant cheers from the seething mass of humanity that had gathered at the quays. A big multitude rushed towards him to touch his holy feet. He was profusely garlanded and taken in a huge procession like a great victor to the accompaniment of an Indian band playing select airs through the thoroughfare bedecked with triumphal arches and festoons and strewn with flowers. The Swami and his disciples, accompanied by Swami Niranjana-nanda who had come all the way from Bengal to receive his beloved brother, took their seats amidst a shower of flowers in the pandal erected for his reception. The Hon. Mr. P. C. Coomaraswamy, on behalf of the Hindu citizens of Colombo, bowed to the Swami in oriental fashion and read an address of welcome which was responded to by the Swami in a most eloquent and impressive speech. During the period of his stay for ten days in Ceylon he visited also Kandy, Anuradhapuram and Jaffna, and everywhere he received tremendous ovation as a mark of appreciation of his invaluable services to the cause of Hindu thought and culture in the West.

It was on Tuesday, January 26, that the steamer reached Pamban where the Raja of Ramnad, a devoted disciple of Swamiji, rushed to meet him in person. The citizens of Pamban accorded him a most cordial welcome

under a decorated pandal. In reply to this address of welcome which was remarkable for its depth of feeling, Swami Vivekananda pointed out that the backbone of the Indian national life was neither politics nor military power, neither commercial supremacy nor mechanical genius, but religion and religion alone, and that the eyes of the whole world were now turned towards this land of India for spiritual food, and India must provide it for all the races. It was in India, he said, that the best ideal of mankind existed, and the Western savants were striving hard to understand this ideal enshrined in the Sanskrit literature and the Philosophy of India. A moral obligation therefore rested on the sons of this land to fully equip themselves for the work of enlightening the world on the problems of human existence. In conclusion Swamiji expressed his deep gratitude to His Highness the Raja of Ramnad who had first conceived the idea of his going to Chicago, put it into his head and persistently urged him to accomplish it. Swamiji wanted at least half a dozen more such Rajas who would take real interest in their dear motherland and work for her amelioration in the spiritual line. The meeting over, the Swami was taken in a State-carriage drawn by the Raja himself along with other people in a big procession. Cannon boomed, bands played and rockets shot forth as a mark of welcome. It was a great national festival for the citizens of Ramnad to get back their beloved and revered Swami once again in their midst.

At Ramnad the Swami, while giving a most eloquent and inspiring reply to the address of welcome presented by the Raja, reiterated almost the very same theme and sentiments which he had articulated in his speeches at Pamban and at the Rameswara temple, and exhorted the audience in the following terms: "Let us all work hard, my brethren ; this is no time for sleep. On our work depends the coming of the India of the future. She is only sleeping. Arise, and awake and see her seated here, on her eternal throne, rejuvenated more glorious than she ever was—this motherland of ours."

Message to India

On his way to Madras, Swamiji visited Paramakudi, Manmadura, Madura, Trichinopalli, Tanjore and Kumbhakonam. In each of these

places he received spontaneous ovation from his countrymen and he enthused them in return with his own spirit and awakened them to an appreciation of the intrinsic value and greatness of their glorious cultural traditions. The enthusiasm reached its peak when Swamiji reached Madras. It was Madras that first recognised the superior merits of Swamiji and found in him the worthiest person to represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions. It was here that the young enthusiasts equipped him for his journey to Chicago and thus enabled him to play the most significant role of a world teacher on the international forum of a religious congregation. The streets and thoroughfares of the great city were profusely decorated ; seventeen triumphal arches were erected ; blazing mottos of welcome were everywhere in evidence ; the whole public life was at a standstill at his coming. Tens of thousands of people crowded the streets to gain a glimpse of the great Swami who was taken, in a spectacular procession amidst thundering shouts of applause, to the "Castle Kernan"—the palatial residence of Mr. Billigiri Iyengar. "The cynosure of all eyes, he appeared in the midst of that procession like a conqueror returning from the battlefield, crowned with glory—not a conqueror of earthly dominions, but a conqueror of hearts, both Eastern and Western". The Reception Committee formed by the leading Hindu gentlemen of the city like the Hon. Mr. Justice Subrahmanya Iyer, made elaborate preparations for according a right royal reception to this cyclonic monk of India. Regarding the uniqueness of the ovation, a leading local paper wrote: "Of all the official receptions that were ever held in Madras, none could equal the one given to Swami Vivekananda. Such an ovation has not been witnessed in Madras within the memory of the oldest man, and we dare say that the scenes of to-day will remain for ever in the memory of the present generation." Swamiji was extremely delighted to see another of his *gurubhais*, Swami Sivananda, who had hastened to Madras to meet the victorious leader. During the nine days which the Swami spent on this occasion at Madras, twenty-four addresses were presented to him in English, Sanskrit, Tamil and Telegu, and the Swami seized this opportunity to place before the country his message to India and the world in a series of brilliant lectures¹⁸ comprising, among others, *My Plan of Campaign*, *The Sages*

of India, *Vedanta in Its Relation to Practical Life* and *The Future of India*. "My friends," he said, "my plan is to start institutions in India, to train our young men as preachers of truths, of our scriptures, in India and outside India. Men, men, these are wanted: everything else will be ready, but strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred such and the world becomes revolutionized. The will is stronger than anything else. Everything must go down before the will, for that comes from God and God Himself; a pure and strong will is omnipotent . . . You have been told and taught that you can do nothing, and non-entities you are becoming every day. Make your nerves strong . . . No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men. It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want. And here is the test of truth—anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and spiritually, reject as poison; there is no life in it, it cannot be true: Truth is strengthening. Truth is purity, truth is all-knowledge . . . They talk of patriotism. I believe in patriotism and I also have my own ideal of patriotism. Three things are necessary for great achievements. First, feel from the heart . . . Through the heart comes the inspiration. Love opens the most impossible gates; love is the gate to all the secrets of the universe. Feel, therefore, my would-be reformers, my would-be patriots! Do you feel! Do you feel that millions and millions of the descendants of gods and of sages have become next-door neighbours to brutes? Do you feel that millions are starving today, and millions have been starving for ages? Do you feel that ignorance has come over the land as a dark cloud? Does it make you restless? Are you seized with that one idea of the misery of ruin, and have you forgotten all about your name, fame, your wives, your children, your property, even your own bodies? Have you done that? That is the first step to become a patriot, the very first step . . . Instead of spending your energies in frothy talk, have you found any way out, any practical solution, some help instead of condemnation, some sweet words to soothe their miseries, to bring them out of this living death? Yet that is not all. Have you got the will to surmount mountain-high obstructions? If the whole world stands against you sword in hand, would you still dare

to do what you think right? . . . Have you got that steadfastness? If you have these three things each one of you will work miracles."

"For the next fifty years this alone shall be our key-note,—this, our great Mother India. Let all other vain Gods disappear for the time from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything. All other Gods are sleeping. What vain Gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the God that we see all round us, the Virat? . . . These are all our Gods—men and animals, and the first Gods we have to worship are our own countrymen.

"In India, religious life forms the centre, the keynote of the whole music of national life ; and if any nation attempts to throw off its national vitality, the direction which has become its own through the transmission of centuries,—that nation dies, if it succeeds in the attempt . . . Social reform has to be preached in India by showing how much more spiritual a life the new system will bring, and politics has to be preached by showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants—its spirituality . . . Therefore before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas the land should first be deluged with spiritual ideas. The first work that demands our attention is that the most wonderful truths confined in our Upanishads, in our Scriptures and Puranas, must be brought out from the books, the monasteries, and the forests and scattered broadcast over the land so that these truths may run like fire all over the country, from north to south, and east to west, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from the Indus to the Brahmaputra.

"Aye, let every man and woman and child, without respect of caste or birth, weakness or strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind every one, there is that Infinite Soul, assuring the infinite possibility and the infinite capacity of all to become great and good. Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached. Arise, awake! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak ; the soul is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him!

"My idea is first of all to bring out the germs of spirituality that are

stored up in our books, and in the possession of a few only, hidden, as it were, in monasteries and in forests—to bring them out; to bring the knowledge out of them, not only from the hands where it is hidden, but from the still more inaccessible chest, the language in which it is preserved, the incrustation of centuries of Sanskrit words. In one word, I want to make them popular. I want to bring out these ideas and let them be the common property of all, of every man in India . . . The ideas must be taught in the language of the people; at the same time, Sanskrit education must go on along with it, because the very sound of Sanskrit words gives a prestige and a power and a strength to the race.

“It seems to us, and to all who come to know, that the conclusions of modern science are the very conclusions the *Vedanta* reached ages ago: only, in modern science they are written in the language of matter. This, then, is another claim of the *Vedanta* upon Western minds, its rationality, the wonderful rationalism of the *Vedanta* . . .

“The world is waiting for the grand idea of universal toleration. It will be a great acquisition to civilization. Nay, no civilization can grow, unless fanaticism, bloodshed, and brutality stop.

“The other idea the world wants from us today . . . is the eternal grand idea of the spiritual oneness of the whole universe. I need not tell you today how the modern researches of the West have demonstrated through physical means, the oneness and the solidarity of the whole universe; how, physically speaking, you and I, the Sun, Moon and Stars, are but little waves or wavelets in the midst of an infinite ocean of matter; how Indian psychology demonstrated ages ago, that, similarly, both body and mind are but mere names or little wavelets in the ocean of matter, the *samasti*, and how, going one step further it is also shown in the *Vedanta* that behind that idea of the unity of the whole show, the real soul is one. There is but one soul throughout the universe, all is but One Existence . . . It is the one great life-giving idea which the world wants from us today . . . They want something more than human sanction for ethical and moral codes to be binding, they want some eternal principle of truth as the sanction of ethics. And where is that eternal sanction to be found except in the only Infinite Reality, that exists in you and in me and in all, in the self, in the

Soul? The infinite oneness of the Soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, that you and I are not only brothers—every literature voicing man's struggle towards freedom has preached that for you—but that you and I are really one. Europe wants it today just as much as our down-trodden masses do, and this great principle is even now unconsciously forming the basis of all the latest political and social aspirations that are coming up in England, Germany, in France and in America.

“What our country now wants, are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face. That is what we want, that can only be created, established and strengthened, by understanding and realizing the ideal of the *Advaita*, that ideal of the oneness of all. Faith, faith, faith in ourselves, faith, faith in God—this is the secret of greatness. If you have faith in the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, and in all the gods which foreigners have now again introduced into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you . . . We have lost faith in ourselves. Therefore, to preach the *Advaita* aspect of the *Vedanta* is necessary to rouse up the hearts of men, to show them the glory of their souls.

“Up, India, and conquer the world with your spirituality. Aye, as has been declared on this soil first, love must conquer hatred, hatred cannot conquer itself. Materialism and all its miseries can never be conquered by materialism. Armies when they attempt to conquer armies only multiply and make brutes of humanity. Spirituality must conquer the West.”

Bengal's Homage to her Heroic Son

Now came the turn of Bengal, the birthplace of Swami Vivekananda, to accord to her distinguished son a fitting reception. He left Madras by boat. No sooner had the steamer docked at Kidderpore with Swamiji and his English disciples on board than they were taken by train from there to the Sealdah Station (Calcutta) where a vast multitude including his

Sannyasin *gurubhais* had already gathered to greet their beloved brother. Immediately on his alighting from the train, he was most cordially received by the Reception Committee headed by Sri Narendranath Sen, the Editor of the *Indian Mirror*. The deafening cheers from the enthusiastic crowd, the singing of devotional songs, shower of flowers and sweet-scented wreaths upon the Swami, and the crushing rush to take the dust of the feet of this spiritual hero, created an emotional scene and atmosphere of an unprecedented nature which beggars description. The horses of the landau whereon the Swami and the Sevier couple were seated were unharnessed, and amidst sky-rending shouts of "Jai Sri Ramakrishna" and "Jai Swami Vivekananda", it was drawn by the young Bengalee boys all along the streets which were beautifully decorated with triumphal arches of welcome, flags and festoons, flowers and evergreens. Thousands cheered him lustily all along the line of march as the party proceeded via Ripon College to Baghbazar where in the palatial building of Rai Pashupati Nath Bose, a banquet had already been arranged for the Swami and his European disciples. In the afternoon they were taken to the beautiful riverside residence of Sri Gopal Lal Seal in Cossipore for their temporary accommodation. Hundreds of people swarmed to the place from day to day to pay homage to the great Swami and to listen to his soul-stirring message, as also to know more about his splendid achievements in the West. The Swami could hardly enjoy even a modicum of rest during the day. To give relief to his tired limbs, he began to spend the daytime at the aforesaid Seal's garden and the night with his *gurubhais* in the silent precincts of the Alambazar monastery where the Math had been shifted in the year 1892.

A splendid arrangement was made to present on the 28th of February, 1897, an address of welcome to Swami Vivekananda on behalf of the citizens of Calcutta in the magnificent residence of Raja Radhakanta Deb Bahadur at Sobha Bazar. The meeting was presided over by Raja Benoy Krishna Deb Bahadur and attended by about five thousand people including Rajas and scholars, illustrious citizens and hundreds of college students. The address of welcome was presented to Swami Vivekananda in a silver casket in an atmosphere of profound solemnity. The Swami was introduced

by the President as the foremost national figure in the life of India. Swamiji in reply gratefully acknowledged the honour the citizens of Calcutta had shown to him on the occasion and expressed his heartfelt thanks for the recognition they had given to the humble services rendered by him to the humanity at large. He made a specific mention of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa—his teacher, master, hero, ideal and god in life, whose spirit was wholly responsible for his phenomenal success in the foreign lands. "If there has been anything achieved by me", said the Swami, "by thoughts or words, or deeds, if from my lips has ever fallen one word that has helped anyone in the world, I lay no claim to it, it was his. But if there have been curses falling from my lips, if there has been hatred coming out of me, it is all mine, and not his. All that has been weak has been mine, and all that has been life-giving, strengthening, pure, and holy, has been his inspiration, his words, and he himself. Yes, my friends, the world has yet to know that man . . . Through thousands of years of chiselling and modelling, the lives of the great prophets of yore come down to us; and yet, in my opinion, not one stands so high in brilliance as that life which I saw with my own eyes, under whose shadow I have lived, at whose feet I have learnt everything,—the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa . . . I do not care in what light you understand this great sage, it matters not how much respect you pay to him, but I challenge you face to face with the fact, that here is a manifestation of the most marvellous power that has been for several centuries in India, and it is your duty, as Hindus, to study this power, to find what has been done for the regeneration, for the good of India and for the good of the human race through it. Aye, long before ideas of universal religion and brotherly feeling between different sects were mooted and discussed in any country in the world, here, in sight of this city, had been living a man whose whole life was a Parliament of Religions as it should be . . . In duty bound therefore for the good of our race, for the good of our religion, I place this great spiritual ideal before you." Referring to the young men of Calcutta, Swamiji said: "Young men of Calcutta, arise, awake, for the time is propitious. Already everything is opening out before us. Be bold and fear not . . . Arise, awake, for your country needs this tremendous sacrifice. It is the young men that will do it."

The young, the energetic, the strong, the well-built, the intellectual,—for them is the task. And we have hundreds and thousands of such young men in Calcutta . . . You know how he (Nachiketa) obtained what he desired. What we want is this *shraddha*. What makes the difference between man and man is the difference in this *shraddha* and nothing else . . . Whatever of material power you see manifested by the Western races is the outcome of this *shraddha*, because they believe in their muscles, and if you believe in your spirit, how much more will it work. Believe in that Infinite Soul, the Infinite Power, which, with consensus of opinion, your books and sages preach. That *Atman* which nothing can destroy, in It is Infinite Power only waiting to be called out . . .

“ . . . I have faith in my country, and especially in the youth of my country. The youth of Bengal have the greatest of all tasks that have ever been placed on the shoulders of young men. I have travelled for the last ten years or so over the whole of India, and my conviction is that from the youth of Bengal will come the power which will raise India once more to her proper spiritual place. Aye, from the youth of Bengal, with this immense amount of feeling and enthusiasm in the blood, will come those heroes, who will march from one corner of the earth to the other, preaching and teaching the eternal spiritual truths of our forefathers. And this is the great work before you. Be not afraid of anything. You will do marvellous work . . . It is fear that is the great cause of misery in the world. It is fear that is the greatest of all superstitions. It is fear that is the cause of our woes, and it is fearlessness that brings heaven even in a moment. Therefore, ‘Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.’ ” Needless to point out that this inspired speech of Swamiji which was a masterpiece of eloquence sent a thrill through the entire audience, and, with the roll of years the explosive ideas articulated through this lecture began to electrify the young generation with a new hope and courage which eventually ushered in a New Order in the eventful annals of modern India.

About this time the birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna was as usual held at the temple-garden of Dakshineswar. Swami Vivekananda, accompanied by his *gurubhais*, participated in this sacred function. The holy reminiscences of the past coupled with the devotional fervour of the

innumerable devotees that mustered strong on this occasion, as also the exalted spiritual atmosphere of the place sanctified by the presence of the Divine Mother and also by the life and realizations of the Great Master, filled Swamiji with an unspeakable joy and emotion. Swamiji caught the eyes of the vast crowds, when he moved from place to place within the campus barefooted, dressed in a flowing *alkhalla* and with a *gerua* turban on the head. It was a veritable spiritual bath for the Swami to go once again with all reverence to the temple of the Mother, the shrine of Sri Radha-kantaji, the room where Sri Ramakrishna used to live. He visited also the memorable Panchavati, the meditation-seat and the place of illumination of Sri Ramakrishna, and the sacred Vilva-tree, another scene of spiritual practices of the Master. In the afternoon the Swami returned to the Alam-bazar Math with a *gurubhai* and a disciple. After a few days another address of welcome was given to Swamiji by the Calcutta public in the Star Theatre. The Swami's lecture on "*The Vedanta in All Its Phases*" in reply to the address was equally impressive. He upheld the greatness of the *Sanatan-Dharma* and the important role the philosophy of *Vedanta* should play in restoring Hinduism once again to its pristine position of sanctity and glory. The *Vedanta*, he proclaimed, must be the background of everything in India if she wanted to get back her initiative in all progressive movements or an all-round growth and development.

Ramakrishna Mission and Its Ideal

Swami Vivekananda now paid serious thoughts to the organisation of his brother-disciples into a powerful and dynamic fraternity,—a spiritual militia that should be dedicated to the service of humanity. The brother-monks had so long been accustomed to a life of meditation and cloistered monasticism in keeping with the traditional spiritual ideals of India's monastic orders, and were not mentally prepared to get entangled in any kind of activity, humanitarian or otherwise. Swamiji quickly realized the attitude of his *gurubhais* and immediately applied himself to the responsible task of converting them to his conception of the new ideal of social and national service that fired him. Though it was extremely painful for

the *gurubhais* all on a sudden to get above their orthodox prejudices, their religious individualism and their habit of free life of peaceful meditation, still they could not ignore or set aside as mere bunkum the rational and convincing interpretation of an ideal monastic life which they must hold before the society for their own good as well as for the well-being of the humanity at large. Swamiji asserted that the ancient cloistered monasticism, which was in India concerned primarily with personal liberation, must receive a new orientation at the hands of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. It must not be allowed to remain an institution altogether cut off from the happinesses and sorrows, the hopes and aspirations of the people at large, but should be brought into the full blaze of the work-a-day world to function as an instrument of liberation, both individual and collective. The Order, emphatically said the Swami to his brother-monks, must represent a synthetic ideal of renunciation and service, which not only prescribed a course of strict moral discipline, contemplation and study but also a life of self-dedication at the altar of humanity for the attainment of the highest goal of human existence.

Thus Swamiji's emotional, and at the same time rational, appeal to the intelligence of his *gurubhais* to move with the spirit of the time and to create a new order of monks in India who would dedicate their lives to help and save other souls as well, was eventually responded to by them with all humility and reverence. Out of their profound faith in their leader and knowing his voice to be the voice of their Master, all bowed their heads to him and girded up their loins to jump into the field of philanthropic service and to go to any place in obedience to the behest of Swamiji. This was one of the greatest triumphs Swami Vivekananda achieved at the initial stage of his manifold activities in India. It has been rightly remarked by Romain Rolland, "The two Ramakrishnas—the one whose outspread wings had brooded over the disciples left behind in the dovecote—and the other who, carried on those same wings, had covered the world in the shape of his great disciple—were bound to come into conflict. But the victory was never in doubt: it was a foregone conclusion not only on account of the immense ascendancy of the young conqueror, the superiority of his genius and the prestige of India's acclamation, but on account of the love

his brethren bore him and that Ramakrishna had shown for him. He was the Master's anointed."¹⁹ Thus the *gurubhais* not only got reconciled to the new interpretation of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings but also welcomed the European disciples of Swamiji into their community without scruple or hesitation. Immediately, Swami Ramakrishnananda, who had been engaged in the ceremonial worship of the Master for twelve years since the inauguration of this new monastic order, and did not leave the precincts of the Math for a single day, went to Madras to start an *Ashrama* there at the bidding of the Swami to spread the message of the Master and interpret the truths of the *Vedanta* in Southern India in the light of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda had already gone to the West at his call to carry on the work started in America and England ; Swami Akhandananda, another of these *gurubhais*, who had travelled on foot to Tibet and the inaccessible Himalayan terrain for many years, and had thereafter worked strenuously for the education of the poor and helpless masses in Rajasthan, now proceeded to carry on relief work in the famine-stricken area in the district of Murshidabad in Bengal and started at Mahula an orphanage for the education of poor children without distinction of caste or creed. Swami Trigunatitananda opened a famine centre at Dinajpur in the year 1897. The other *gurubhais* of the Swami also kept themselves ready to take up works of social usefulness whenever and wherever necessary. Moreover, a brilliant galaxy of immaculate souls, inspired by Swamiji's lofty ideal of renunciation and service, joined the Order and stood by him to serve the poor in a spirit of worship of the Divine and to preach the cardinal teachings of the scriptures to one and all, without distinction, for their material and spiritual welfare. Thus within an incredibly short period of time, various monasteries (*Math Centres*), Homes of Service (*Sevashramas*), relief centres in times of natural calamities, grew up in various places with the hearty co-operation of his *gurubhais* and his disciples.

Swamiji now seriously thought of organising the hitherto sporadic and unsystematic spiritual and philanthropic activities of his *gurubhais* and of uniting the lay and monastic disciples into an Association for giving a concrete shape to his comprehensive programme of activity, covering the

major problems of Indian life, viz. liquidation of illiteracy, rural reconstruction, work among the labouring and backward classes, economic and social uplift of the people, removal of untouchability, female education, relief works, preservation of indigenous culture, dissemination of the accumulated spiritual wisdom of the race and the evolution of a cultural synthesis. With this end in view, he called a meeting of the monastic and lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna at the house of Sri Balaram Bose at Baghbazar in the afternoon of May 1, 1897. Swamiji discussed before this representative gathering the need of forming an Association and unfolded the principal objective of this proposed corporate body as well. The assembled members enthusiastically supported the proposal and the aims and objects of the Association were formulated and adopted unanimously as follows in the second meeting held on May, 5:—

1. The Association (*Sangha*) shall be known as the Ramakrishna Mission.

2. (a) This new Mission is to preach the truths which Sri Ramakrishna has, for the good of humanity, preached and demonstrated by practical application in his own life, and to help others to put these truths into practice in their lives for their temporal, mental and spiritual advancement ;

(b) to conduct the activities of the movement for the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be so many forms only of one undying Eternal Religion.

2. Its methods of action are :

(a) to train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses,

(b) to promote and encourage arts and industries, and

(c) to introduce and spread among the people in general Vedantic and other religious ideas in the way in which they were elucidated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

4. It should have two branches of action :

(a) Indian Work Department and

(b) Foreign Department.

(a) The activities of the Indian Department should be directed to the

establishment of *Maths* and *Ashramas* in different parts of India for the training of *Sannyasins* and such of the householders as may be willing to devote their lives to the teaching of others ;

(b) whereas its work in the Foreign Department should be to send trained members of the Order to countries outside India to start centres there for the preaching of *Vedanta* in order to bring about a closer relation and better understanding between India and foreign countries.

5. The aims and ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it shall have no connection with politics.

6. Anyone who believes in the mission of Sri Ramakrishna, or who sympathizes or is willing to co-operate with the above mentioned aims and objects of the Association, is eligible for membership.

The aims and objects of the Mission having thus been specified, the Swami himself became the General President and made Swami Brahmananda and Swami Yogananda, the President and the Vice-President, respectively, of the Calcutta Centre. For three years the Ramakrishna Mission held its sitting every Sunday at the house of Balaram Basu at Baghbazar in Calcutta. When, on one occasion, he found one of his *guru-bhais* still in doubt as to whether the works initiated by Swamiji were in full accord with the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, the Swami was roused to an apostolic mood and fulminated as follows with quivering emotion : "How do you know that these are not in keeping with his ideas? Do you want to shut Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of infinite ideas, within your own limits? I shall break these limits and scatter his ideas broadcast all over the world. . . Infinite are the ideas and infinite are the paths that lead to the goal. Blessed are we that we have found refuge at the feet of our Master, and it is our bounden duty to give the ideas, entrusted to us, freely to the world. . . The thing is this : Sri Ramakrishna is far greater than his disciples understand him to be. He is the embodiment of infinite spiritual ideas capable of development in infinite ways. Even if one can find a limit to the knowledge of Brahman, one cannot measure the unfathomable depths of our Master's mind! One gracious glance of his eyes can create a hundred thousand Vivekanandas at this instant! If he chooses now instead to work through me, making me his

instrument, I can only bow to his will." Thus the doubts that harassed the souls of his *gurubhais* in this regard were silenced once for all and they were swept away in the maelstrom of apostolic fervour and enthusiasm created by their leader for humanitarian service in the name of Sri Ramakrishna. It redounds not a little to the credit of this great Swami that he bore down all sentimental opposition with the force of his dynamic and convincing ideas and harmonised the two apparently contradictory ideals of renunciation and service in monastic life and gave concrete shape to these divine impulses through the institution started under the name of the Ramakrishna Mission for practising and preaching the Eternal Religion in its universal aspect.

North Indian Tour

Soon after the formation of the Association, Swamiji started, under medical advice, for Almora on May 6, 1897, in the company of some of his *gurubhais* and disciples with a view to recouping his failing health in the bracing climate of that hilly region. Immediately on his arrival there, he was most cordially received by the elite of the city and presented with an address of welcome by Pandit Jawala Dutt Joshi on behalf of the Reception Committee formed for the purpose. During his stay at Almora for two months and a half, Swamiji regained to some extent his lost health, though he had to satisfy from time to time the demands of the public for lectures and talks on a variety of subjects. But he could hardly rest content with this type of sporadic activity concentrated in a particular area in the face of the numerous invitations he now received to visit the different parts of India. Thus from now till January, 1898, Swamiji toured like a whirlwind through the historic places of Northern India, delivering his stirring message to his beloved countrymen with his characteristic zeal and enthusiasm. Whether in the Punjab or in Kashmir, at Khetri or Alwar, at Ajmer or Jodhpur, and at other principal states of Rajputana,—in every place the Swami was the recipient of spontaneous ovations and his pregnant utterances were listened to with great delight and profound respect by all from the highest to the lowest. He came into close contact not only with

the Rajas and Maharajas but also with the other sections of the Indian population and placed before them the vital needs of their motherland as also their duties to face the trying situation with courage in both hands.

In the course of this eventful tour, he pointed out in telling terms the glorious achievements of India in the past and also the intrinsic worth and greatness of her cultural heritage handed down to the posterity by her spiritual forbears. Besides, he unfolded before the country a glowing picture of how the spiritual ideas of the race, which had their origin in the soil of India in the dim past, travelled from here to the far distant countries of the East and the West, the North and the South through the shining scores of centuries, considerably influencing the philosophical thoughts of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and the Egyptian Neo-Platonism and also the cultural life of Spain, Germany and other European countries at different periods of history from the most ancient times. He also traced the abiding influence of Indian thought in the writings of some of the eminent modern European thinkers like Schopenhauer, Kant, Max Müller, Paul Deussen and the like.²⁰ He emphatically said that it was the perennial spring of spiritual wisdom which must invigorate all the departments of human activity. The eternal principles which were revealed by the saints and sages of India from age to age and which lay enshrined in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the *Gita* and other sacred lores of the Hindus must come to the rescue of the secular life of the present age and also form the very basis of all the future developments in the socio-political life of the country. Above all, he made it distinctly clear that the national well-being depended not upon clinging to the mass of superstitions and local customs which were mere lifeless accretions of ages and needed a weeding out with a strong hand, but upon the acquisition of such noble virtues as purity of character, courage, strength, self-respect, love and service for others in the life of each individual. For, on the strength of the individual lay the strength of the whole nation.

It was during this memorable travel that Swamiji had an interview with the Maharaja of Kashmir in response to an invitation from His Highness, and dwelt *inter alia* upon the significance of preaching *Vedanta* in Europe and America, and upon his own mission and plan of work in India. Be-

sides, he had to address a good number of meetings on religious and other subjects of deep national significance. The Swami had also an intimate talk with Babu Mahesh Chandra Bhattacharya, an officer of the Kashmir State, and also with the Maharaja himself about his idea of establishing a monastery somewhere in Kashmir and received a good deal of encouragement from them in this regard. While at Lahore he met Sri Tirtha Ram Goswami, then a professor of Mathematics in one of the Lahore Colleges. It was under his guidance that the students of the college took a leading part in arranging for public lectures which the Swami delivered there. The relation between the Swami and Tirtha Ram grew so intimate and cordial that the latter presented the Swami with a gold watch on the eve of his departure from here. Swamiji took the watch very kindly but put it back in Tirtha Ram's pocket saying, "Very well, friend, I shall wear it *here* in this pocket." The prophetic utterance of Swamiji did not take much time to fructify. For, some time later, Prof. Tirtha Ram renounced the world, and became widely known as Swami Rama Tirtha, and subsequently preached *Vedanta* both in India and America. At Lahore a very touching incident occurred. Motilal Bose, an old neighbour and playmate of the Swami, awe-struck at the high esteem and reverence in which the Swami was held by hundreds, was in a fix as to how he would now address his old friend. The Swami hearing this from him replied with his childlike simplicity, "Have you gone mad, Moti? Don't you know I am the same Naren and you are the same Moti?" A similar instance happened when Upendranath, another class-mate of his, came to meet him at Balaram Babu's house. The Swami seeing him enter the room stood up and with open arms hugged him to his bosom. There are other touching instances of similar character to show how humble and unostentatious the Swami was even in the midst of his splendid triumphs and great honour. At Alwar, when a reception ceremony was going on and the Swami was surrounded by prominent men, he espied one of his poor but devoted disciples standing at a distance poorly dressed. The Swami without caring for the formalities or for etiquette called aloud "Ramasnehi! Ramasnehi!"—for that was the name of the man—and having had him brought before him through the throng of notables enquired about his welfare and talked

with him freely as of old. On a previous occasion at Madras, when the Swami was seated in his carriage of honour, he saw his disciple Swami Sadananda standing amidst the huge crowd. He at once shouted out: "Come Sadananda! Come my boy!" And he made his young disciple take his seat with him in the same carriage. These episodes, though apparently very trifling, bring into bold but graceful relief another side of his character—the real characteristics of Swamiji as a *Sannyasin* divested of all the gorgeous paraphernalia of his achievements and the high distinction as a world teacher.

Training of Eastern and Western Disciples

Having thus completed his lecturing tour, Swamiji came back to Calcutta about the middle of January, 1898, with a view to moulding the life and character of his disciples, both Eastern and Western, so as to make them fit instruments for carrying into practice his plans for the regeneration of India. The Alambazar Math having been considerably damaged by the great earthquake that occurred on the 12th June, 1897, it had to be removed from there in February, 1898, to the rented garden-house of Nilambar Mookherjee in the village of Belur on the western bank of the Ganges. The Swami, in order to establish a permanent home for the Ramakrishna Order, purchased on the 5th March, 1898, a plot of land at Belur on the northern side of the aforesaid garden-house for a sum of Rs. 39,000/- (thirty-nine thousand) which was donated by Swamiji's devoted English admirer Miss Henrietta F. Müller and his American follower Mrs. Ole Bull, and the work of construction was forthwith undertaken. The purchase of this particular site was somewhat in the nature of the fulfilment of a prophecy of Swamiji who, long before his departure for the West, once said to some of his *gurubhais*, whilst standing on the Baranagore ghat: "Something tells me that our permanent Math will be in this neighbourhood across the river." This forecast of the great seer was thus actualized to the letter and spirit in the fulness of time through Divine Dispensation.

Many of Swamiji's Western disciples, including Miss Henrietta F. Müller, Miss Josephine MacLeod, Miss Margaret E. Noble and Mrs. Ole

Bull, had by this time come to India and gathered round the magnetic personality of their great teacher at Belur. While living at the monastery at Nilambar Mookherjee's garden-house, the Swami used to frequent the river-side cottages on the newly purchased Belur Math ground, where his European disciples were lodged for the time being, and spent hours daily with them interpreting the ideals of Indian religions in vivid, poetic and dramatic colours. The Swami was anxious that they should make an impartial study of Indian life and culture. They should not only see the glories but also have especially a clear understanding of the problems of the land and bring the ideals and methods of scientific culture to bear upon the task of finding a solution of the same. He made them realize that India's culture had evolved through thousands of years of trial and experimentation till it had attained the highest standard of excellence ever reached by humanity. Inspired by Swamiji's brilliant exposition of the Hindu religious ideals, they caught glimpses of the true import of the ideologies of the Hindus, till they became woven into the texture of their very being. The period of training of the Western disciples of the Swami extended over nearly the entire period of the year 1898 and he put his whole soul to this responsible task. The training they thus received from the Swami brought about a complete change in their mental make-up and made them ardent apostles of the glory and greatness of Hinduism and Hindusthan. Among these Western disciples he particularly chose Miss Margaret Noble, in whom he had great hope and trust, and as such his illuminating discourses were mainly directed to this accomplished disciple who had come to India on January 28, 1898, at the call of the Swami to work in conjunction with Miss Müller for the education of Indian women. In a public meeting held at the Star Theatre, over which Swamiji himself presided, Miss Margaret Noble was for the first time introduced by him to the Calcutta public on the 11th March, as 'another gift of England to India' (the other being Miss Henrietta Müller who had already consecrated her life to the good of India). Only a few days later (i.e. on the 15th March, 1898) she took the vow of *Brahmacharya* at the hands of her Master at the new monastery at the temple-garden of Nilambar Mookherjee, and was given most appropriately the name of Nivedita (one who is dedicated), as

she had decided to devote her whole life to the service of India and the work of Swamiji.

On the 30th March, the Swami left for Darjeeling for the second time to enjoy some rest in that lonely hilly retreat of the Himalayas. But he was not destined to stay there for long. The news of the sudden outbreak of the plague in Calcutta in a virulent form and the widespread panic and confusion prevailing among the people soon brought him down to the plains. Immediately on reaching the Math on May 3, he made hurried preparations with the help of his *gurubhais* and disciples, including Sister Nivedita, to mitigate the sufferings of the afflicted and the terror-stricken. When one of his *gurubhais* told him about the dearth of funds to meet the situation, Swamiji emphatically declared, "Why? we shall sell the newly-bought Math grounds, if necessary! We are Sannyasins, we must be ready to sleep under the trees and live on daily *bhiksha* as we did before. What! should we care for Math and possessions when by disposing of them we could relieve thousands suffering before our eyes!" Fortunately it was not necessary to take this extreme step; for, very soon ample funds poured in for the purpose from some other quarters. The relief rendered to the plague patients and the measures adopted by the Swami and the heroic band of his selfless workers were very much appreciated both by the public and the Government, and made the infant organisation extremely popular to the people at large. They thus nobly exemplified in their lives the practical application of the doctrines of the *Vedanta* by means of this loving service to the suffering thousands in times of their direst needs.

Pilgrimage to Amarnath

The concluding phase of Swamiji's tour through historic India now began in the company of a select group of his disciples in response to the repeated requests of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier who had taken up their residence at Almora. On the 11th May the party started from Howrah, and after a brief halt at Nainital, one of the beauty-spots located in the bosom of the Himalayan range, Swamiji reached Almora and became the guest of the Sevier-couple at Thompson House. It was here in the serene solitude of the

Himalayas that Sister Nivedita, the spiritual daughter of the Swami, completed the course of her spiritual training at the hands of her Master and, as a result, all her deep-rooted preconceptions, mental obsessions and prejudices were wiped out once for all. It was here that the Swami was greatly shocked to hear the news of the sudden demise of the celebrated saint Pawahari Baba and also of the death of his dear disciple Mr. Goodwin, who passed away at Ootacamund due to an attack of enteric fever. Indeed the loss of such a loving and faithful disciple, who had rendered yeoman's service to Swamiji for so many years with an unswerving spirit of devotion, caused a terrible affliction to the tender heart of the Master. These bereavements were so sudden and shocking that Swamiji became impatient to get away immediately from the place. So he started on the 11th June for Kashmir, accompanied only by Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss MacLeod and Miss Margaret Noble (i.e. those Western disciples who had come to Almora with him from Calcutta). Swamiji and his companions very much enjoyed the trip to Kashmir in three house-boats up the river Jhelum through the Vale of Srinagar. The time spent in the *Dungas* (house-boats) on the river in and about this capital of Kashmir afforded a unique opportunity to the disciples of the Swami for enriching their fund of knowledge and experience in a variety of ways. After visiting the remarkable places of historical and religious interest in this earthly paradise noted for its seats of culture, spiritual associations and scenic grandeur, Swamiji undertook on the 26th July his memorable pilgrimage to the sacred shrine of Amarnath situated in the glacial gorge of the Western Himalayas. As a special privilege Sister Nivedita was permitted to join him in the pilgrimage. On the way the Swami most scrupulously observed all orthodox customs and rules of conduct befitting a devout pilgrim to the holy temple of Lord Shiva. On the 2nd August, they reached their long-cherished destination. The Swami was seized with divine emotion when he entered the temple and saw before him the unmelting ice-image of *Shiva-Lingam* shining in purity, with the vault itself dripping offerings of water over it. He bowed low before the Lord in deep adoration and was instantly blessed with a mystical experience which he disclosed afterwards as a boon granted by Lord Amarnath to give up his body according to his own sweet will. So saturated did the Swami

become with the living presence of that God that for days thereafter he could not speak of anything else than Shiva—the Eternal One, the all-renouncing Great Monk, rapt in profound meditation and completely free from any worldly taint.

Soon after this pilgrimage, when he returned to Srinagar, his mind became fully absorbed in the thought of the Divine Mother Kali. The name of the Goddess Kali was constantly on his lips, and in the intensity of emotion he had a wonderful vision of the Mother as the repository of all good and evil of the universe, as the Primal Source of creation, preservation and destruction,—as love and terror in one. In an ecstasy of delight he bodied forth his spiritual experience in his famous poem, *Kali The Mother*, which ends with a grim picture of the Mother as follows:

“Come, Mother, come!
For Terror is Thy name,
Death is in Thy breath,
And every shaking step
Destroys a world for e’er.
Thou ‘Time’, the All-Destroyer!
Come, O Mother, Come!
Who dares misery love
And hug the form of Death,
Dance in Destruction’s dance,
To him the Mother comes.”

He said to Nivedita: “The Mother Herself is *Brahman*. Even Her curse is blessing. The heart must become a cremation-ground ; pride, selfishness, desire, all burnt to ashes. Then and then alone will the Mother come.”

Following this experience, the Swami abruptly retired alone to the Coloured Springs of Kshir-Bhavani on the 30th September. Here he offered ritualistic worship to the Goddess with whole-souled devotion and practised severe austerities for the attainment of the grace of the Divine Mother. And as a special *sadhana*, he adored a little daughter of a Brahman Pandit as Uma Kumari (the Divine Virgin). A splendid spiritual illumination soon dawned on him which swept away from his consciousness all thought

of Leader, Worker, or Teacher. He was now a transfigured personality, a monk, in all nakedness of *sannyasa*. When he came back to the house-boat on October 6, he exclaimed in all tenderness to his disciples: "It is all Mother now! All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it is only Mother! Mother!"

The Consecration of the Belur Math

The health of Swami Vivekananda was greatly undermined due to the severe strain put on his mind and nerves in the course of this long sojourn in Northern India. Very soon the party returned to Lahore. But Swamiji looked so pale and worn out that he was brought back for rest and treatment to the Belur Math on the 18th October by Swami Sadananda, who had hurried down to Lahore from Almora on the receipt of an express wire. His *gurubhais* were filled with great joy to find their leader once again in their midst; but the condition of his health caused grave anxiety in their minds. Swamiji, without paying any heed to his physical deterioration, took up in right earnest the responsible work of training the members of the Order. The monks and *Brahmacharins* of the Math were thrilled with ineffable delight when the Holy Mother, accompanied by a number of women devotees, visited the Math on the 13th November, the day of the Kali Puja, and thus blessed the site of the permanent abode of the Ramakrishna Order by worshipping the Master there in the picture kept by her in her own shrine. In the afternoon the Holy Mother performed the opening ceremony of the Sister Nivedita Girls' School at Baghbazar, at the request of the Swami. After the sacred function had been over, the Holy Mother "prayed that the blessings of the Great Mother of the universe might be upon the school and that the girls it should train be ideal girls". Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda and Swami Saradananda and Sister Nivedita, who were present there on this occasion, considered this benediction of the Mother as a good omen for the institution inaugurated for an all-round education of Indian womanhood. It was in the year 1918 that the management of the school was formally taken over by the authorities of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Elaborate preparations were now made for the consecration of the Ramakrishna Math at Belur. Though the installation ceremony of the image of Sri Ramakrishna took place on December 9, 1898, and the Math was finally shifted from Nilambar Mookherjee's garden-house to the Belur Math on January 2, 1899, the consecration of the newly purchased Math grounds had been celebrated long ago in the early part of the month of March, 1898. On this latter occasion, which was a 'red letter day' in the history of the Ramakrishna Order, Swamiji, after making ablutions in the Ganges and putting on a new *gerua* robe, worshipped the sacred relics of Sri Ramakrishna at the garden-house of Nilambar Mookherjee with profound veneration. "After worship a procession was formed of the whole Brotherhood, which wended its way by the bank of the Ganges from Nilambar Mookherjee's garden-house to the site of the new monastery, led by the Swami who carried on his right shoulder the urn containing the hallowed remains of Sri Ramakrishna. The sound of the blowing of conch-shells and the beating of gongs resounded across the river. On the way the Swami said to a disciple:—"The Master once told me,—'I will go and live where-soever it will be your pleasure to take me, carrying me on your shoulders,—be it under a tree or in the humblest cottage!' With faith in that gracious promise I myself am now carrying him to the site of our future Math. Know for certain, my boy, that so long as his name inspires his followers with his ideals of purity, holiness and loving spirit of charity to all men, even so long shall he, the Master, sanctify the place with his hallowed presence."²¹ When the Math was in sight, the Swami spoke of the glorious future which he felt it was to have: "It would be a Centre in which would be recognized and practised a grand harmony of all creeds and faiths as exemplified in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, and only ideas of religion in its universal aspect would be preached. And from this centre of universal toleration would go forth the shining message of goodwill and peace and harmony to deluge the world."²²

When the procession reached the Math ground, the sacred urn was placed on a special seat and worshipped with solemn religious rites. Swamiji lighted the sacrificial fire and performed the sacred *viraja homa* which was attended only by the monks of the Order. He was now satisfied that a

permanent place and sufficient means to build a temple for the Master with a monastery as the Headquarters of the Order had been found for the dissemination of the universal teachings of the Master. Swamiji said, "... Today I feel free from the weight of the responsibility which I have carried with me for twelve long years. And now the vision comes to my mind! This Math shall become a great centre of learning and *sadhana*. Pious householders will erect houses for themselves on the grounds round this future religious university and live there, with the Sannyasins in the centre. To the south, the followers of the Lord from England and America will come and make their abode."³²

A few days later Swamiji disclosed to one of his disciples in the course of a conversation his ideas of the scope and ideals of the Math as follows: "... From here will be disseminated ideals harmonizing *Jnana*, *Bhakti*, *Yoga* and *Karma*. The time will come when by the mere will of the Sannyasins of this Math, life will vibrate into the deadened souls of men. All these visions are rising before me. On that land to the south will be the Temple of Learning, modelled after the manner of our ancient *Tols*. In it will be taught Grammar, Philosophy, Arts, Science, Literature, Rhetoric, Hindu Codes of Law, Scriptures, and English. There the young *Brahmacharins* will live and study the *Shastras*. The old institution of *Brahmacharyam* must be established anew. But its foundation must be laid on a broad basis, and many changes and modifications suited to the needs of the times will have to be introduced into it."³⁴

Since his return from the North Indian tour to the Belur Math, Swamiji had to remain occasionally in Calcutta for the treatment of asthma from which he had been suffering. But this acute illness notwithstanding, he used to meet even there numerous people from early morning till eight or nine at night. It was through the inspiration of Swamiji that the Bengali fortnightly organ of the Order, the *Udbodhan*, was first brought out with Swami Trigunatitananda as its Editor and Manager on January 14, 1899, with the object of presenting the highest doctrines of the *Vedas* and the *Vedanta* to the people in the light of the universal teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. With the return of Swami Saradananda from America, the affairs of the Math were very efficiently managed with his help. Religious

discourses, study of scriptures and other spiritual and intellectual work went on in the Math with clock-like regularity and precision. The younger members were granted adequate freedom to carry on the works in their respective spheres without much interference. Swamiji in these days laid great stress on the ideals and practice of the monastic life and tried to make new entrants fully conscious of the responsibilities of the life of renunciation they had embraced for the realization of God. He moreover busied himself with regular classes on the *Vedas*, the *Bhagavata*, the *Gita* and other scriptures and exhorted them by saying, "The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man loses faith in himself, death comes. Believe first in yourself and then in God. A handful of strong men will move the world. We need a heart to feel, a brain to conceive and a strong arm to do the work." Thus, through strenuous ceaseless efforts, he succeeded in building up a heroic band of the 'sappers and miners in the army of religion' for the reconstruction of Indian national life and for the diffusion of Vedantic ideas throughout the length and breadth of the world.

Himalayan Monastery

Swamiji now seriously thought of giving a concrete shape to his long-contemplated plan of establishing a monastery in some secluded place of the Himalayas where the people from the East and the West could live together in spiritual comradeship and practise the *Vedanta* philosophy and get their outlook on life greatly widened by a mutual exchange of their highest cultural and spiritual ideas. In the course of his recent itineracy, he had searched in vain for a suitable site for such an *ashrama* in the hills. Eventually Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, accompanied by Swami Swarupananda, travelled far into the interior of the District of Almora and, after a diligent search, selected for the *ashrama* the estate of Mayavati lying at a distance of 50 miles from Almora at an altitude of 6800 ft. and commanding a magnificent view of the eternal snow ranges of the Himalayas. With the approval of the Swami, the spot was immediately purchased and the

monastery under the name of the Advaita Ashrama came into existence with his heartfelt blessings on March 19, 1899, which synchronised with the auspicious birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. In order that devotees hailing from different parts of the world and belonging to various faiths might carry on their spiritual practices without let or hindrance, it was enjoined by the Swami as a special rule that in that *Ashrama* there would be no worship of images, pictures or symbols of God, nor any religious ceremony or ritual except the *Viraja Homa*—not even the worship of the Master. Moreover this *Ashrama* became from now the permanent home for the *Prabuddha Bharat*, an English organ of the Ramakrishna Order. This journal, it is to be noted, was first started at Madras in July, 1896, by the Madras disciples of Swamiji under the able editorship of Sri B. R. Rajam Iyer, a true Vedantist. But after the death of its gifted editor in May, 1898, its publication remained suspended till it was resumed through the inspiration of Swamiji at the Thompson House at Almora with Swami Swarupananda as its editor, and Mr. Sevier as manager, in August, 1898. Now that a permanent monastery had been established at Mayavati, the office of the *Prabuddha Bharat* was shifted from Almora to this new *Ashrama*, and a small hand-press was also bought and set up there to facilitate the publication of the journal and also the printing of books when necessary. Thus the long-cherished desire of Swamiji to build up an ideal *Ashrama* of this type in some sequestered part of the Himalayas at last came to be materialized through the earnestness and the munificent financial assistance of the Sevier couple who began to live there in a separate bungalow in silent pursuit of their spiritual practices. With the hearty co-operation of his *gurubhais* and the disciples many other institutions of public utility grew up in different parts of India under his directions, and the Swami had the satisfaction to see that the life-giving ideas disseminated through the medium of these centres of activity powerfully worked to bring about a marvellous change in the outlook of the moribund race.

Second Journey to the West

After consolidating his newly started activities in India, Swamiji strongly felt an urge to take a trip to the West to personally inspect how far the

works founded in the foreign lands had progressed during his absence. Besides, the doctors, apprehending a sudden physical breakdown of the Swami due to the overstraining of his nerves in the midst of his whirlwind activities in India, had advised him to go on a sea-voyage to recoup his fast deteriorating health. Accompanied by Sister Nivedita and Swami Turiyananda, one of his brother monks well versed in Sanskrit studies, Swamiji boarded the steam-ship 'Golconda' on June 20, 1899, and started for the West. Swamiji, while explaining the reason for his selecting Swami Turiyananda as a suitable person for work in the alien land, said that in himself the people of the West had seen the fighting spirit in defence of the Hindu religion, and now they would find in Swami Turiyananda a person of burning renunciation, meditative habit and calm and retiring disposition—a man born and bred in the best traditions and austere discipline of Brahmanhood.

This sea-voyage afforded Sister Nivedita a golden opportunity to be in more intimate contact with her spiritual Preceptor and to listen, with deep interest and profit, to a lucid comparative analysis of the fundamentals of the historical, cultural and religio-philosophical traditions of the East and the West from day to day. These in fact served as an eye-opener to Sister Nivedita. She was so deeply impressed and spiritually inspired that she once candidly remarked that it was a pilgrimage to go on a voyage round the world in the company of an enlightened *Guru*. The party reached London on July 31, and after only two weeks' stay in Wimbledon, a suburb of the metropolis, Swamiji left London for America on August 16, accompanied by Swami Turiyananda and his two American disciples, Mrs. Funke and Sister Christine, who had come to London to take him to America. Immediately on his arrival in New York, Swamiji was accommodated in the Ridgely Manor, a beautiful country-residence of Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, and he remained in this peaceful retreat until November 5, to the great delight of his hosts. Being immensely satisfied to see that the *Vedanta* work had made phenomenal progress in America through the energetic activities of his *gurubhai* Swami Abhedananda, Swamiji soon went to California where he founded new Vedanta centres at San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda. During his stay in California, Swamiji received

a gift of 160 acres of land through the generosity of Miss Minnie Boock, one of his devoted students. The place with its picturesque sylvan surroundings was ideally situated on the eastern slope of Mount Hamilton in Santa Clara County of California at an elevation of about 2500 ft. away from the din and bustle of town life. Swami Turiyananda went with twelve students to take charge of "Peace Retreat" or *the Shanti Ashrama* as it was appropriately named, and began to give them training in meditation, while he himself lived an austere monastic life as he used to do in India. Gradually the silent but intensely spiritual life which Swami Turiyananda lived in the company of his students in that lonely *Ashrama* exercised a great influence not only upon the select group of his young students but also upon all who, attracted by his luminous personality, came to the monastery for spiritual guidance. Thus the ideas spread far and wide and the work prospered under the able leadership of Swami Turiyananda.

Swami Vivekananda's stay for about a year and a half in America on the occasion of this second visit served some important purposes: A few new centres were opened, previous ones were placed on a sounder footing and fresh acquaintances were made, which contributed considerably to the stabilisation of *Vedanta* work in America. While in California he had to deliver no less than one hundred lectures both in the north and the south of the State, besides private interviews to numerous ardent souls who grew more and more interested to know much about Indian thought and culture. As a matter of fact, he had to move constantly from place to place to fulfil the pressing demands of the ever-increasing number of the admirers of *Vedanta* philosophy, even though he had no intention this time to harness himself so much to the wheel of ceaseless activity for reasons of his health. But, in his emaciated body he carried a brazier of energy, breathing out action and combat, and plunged headlong into the whirlpool of work for disseminating the universal gospel of his Master, heedless of all consequences. In the meantime Nivedita, who had been on a lecturing tour to gather funds for her girls' school in Calcutta, spoke eloquently on the ideals of Hindu women, ancient arts of India, and such other subjects bearing mainly on Indian culture and religion, and made earnest appeals to the conscience of the enlightened womanhood of America to lend their

support to this noble cause of education for Indian women. Very soon her labour was amply rewarded in that the various organised societies of women in America assured substantial financial help to her for the education of women in India.

Swamiji, though full of mirth and sweetness even in the midst of his whirlwind activity, now felt extremely tired from excessive mental and physical strain and his mind longed for complete rest. We get from the letter which he addressed from Alameda to Miss MacLeod on April 18, 1900, a glimpse of this strong yearning to break all bonds and plunge into that unfathomable ocean of spiritual ecstasy which he used to enjoy at the feet of his beloved Master in the temple-garden of Dakshineswar in days long past. The letter reads :

“Work is always difficult. Pray, for me, that my work stops for ever, and my whole soul be absorbed in Mother. Her work, She knows.

“I am well, very well mentally. I feel the rest of the soul more than that of the body. The battles are lost and won! I have bundled my things and am waiting for the great Deliverer.

“Shiva, O Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore!

“After all, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Sri Ramakrishna under the Banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature ; works and activities, doing good and so forth are all superimpositions.

“Now I again hear his voice, the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking, love dying, work becoming tasteless ; the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the Master calling! ‘I come, Lord, I come!’ ‘Let the dead bury the dead ; follow thou Me!’ ‘I come, my beloved Lord, I come!’

“Yes, I come! Nirvana is before me! I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath.

“I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders, glad to enter Peace. I leave none bound ; I take no bonds. Whether this body will fall and release me or I enter into freedom in the body,—the old man is gone, gone forever, never to come back again!

“The guide, the Guru, the leader, the teacher, has passed away ;—the boy, the student, the servant, is left behind.

"... I come, Mother, I come, in thy warm bosom,—floating wheresoever Thou takest me,—in the voiceless, in the strange, in the wonderland—I come, a spectator, no more an actor.

"Oh, it is so calm! My thoughts seem to come from a great, great distance in the interior of my own heart. They seem like faint, distant whispers, and peace is upon everything—sweet, sweet peace—like that one feels for a few moments just before falling into sleep, when things are seen and felt like shadows,—without fear, without love, without emotion,—peace that one feels alone, surrounded with statues and pictures! I come, Lord, I come.

"The world is, but not beautiful nor ugly, but as sensations, without exciting any emotion! Oh, the blessedness of it! Everything is good and beautiful, for things are all losing their relative proportions to me,—my body among the first. Om That Existence!"

Towards the latter part of his stay in California Swamiji received an invitation from the Foreign Delegates' Committee of the Congress of the History of Religions to deliver lectures before that distinguished assembly. Though it was organised as a part of the *Paris Exposition Universelle*, it was not a real Parliament of Religions, but was meant exclusively for such scholars as devoted themselves to the study of the origin and history of different religions only. Before starting for Paris, Swamiji visited the Vedanta Society headquarters at New York where Mr. Leggett had resigned his presidentship due to the pressure of his other activities in favour of Dr. Herschell C. Parker of the Columbia College who was unanimously elected to replace him. Swamiji delivered a few public lectures and held conversations for the benefit of his old friends and disciples, and he was immensely pleased at the excellent progress the Vedanta Society had made during this brief period. Thus after finishing his programme of work in America, Swamiji sailed for Paris on July 20, 1900, to attend the famous Congress of the History of Religions.

On reaching Paris, Swamiji was at first the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett at their residence in the *Place des Etats Unis*. But subsequently he began to live with Monsieur Jules Bois, a renowned journalist, philosopher and student of comparative religion, in order that thereby he might enrich his knowledge of French and speak with ease in that tongue in the historic

session of the Congress. Though Swamiji attended several sittings of the Congress, his health did not permit him to speak before the distinguished gathering more than twice. In the first lecture he ably debated with the Western Orientalist, Mr. Oppert, who endeavoured to trace the origin of the *Salagramasila* and the *Shiva-Lingam* to mere phallicism. Swamiji proved, in the light of the Vedic and other Indian scriptural evidences, that the "*Shiva-Lingam* and the *Salagrama-sila* had no more to do with sex-worship than the Holy Communion in Christianity had in common with cannibalism." The *Shiva-Lingam*, asserted the Swami, had its origin in the idea of the *Yupa-stambha* or *Skambha*, the sacrificial post, idealised in Vedic ritual as the symbol of the Eternal *Brahman*; whereas "the *Salagrama-silas* were natural stones, resembling the artificially cut stones of the Dhatu Garbha or metal-wombed stone-relic-cases of the Buddhist Stupas, and, thus being first worshipped by the Bauddhas, were gradually adopted into Vaishnavism". As a matter of fact the explanation of the *Salagrama-sila* as a phallic emblem was an imaginary invention. He emphatically upheld the theory that it was the degenerate period in India following the downfall of Buddhism, that had brought on the association of sex with the *Shiva-Lingam*. In the second lecture, the Swami in a masterly way dwelt on the Vedas as the common basis of Hinduism as also of Buddhism and every other religious belief in India. Both his lectures were highly appreciated by the Western Orientalists who admitted that the views of the modern school of Sanskrit scholars in the West were largely the same as those of the Swami.

During this period of his stay in Paris, Swamiji got an opportunity to make a critical study of the French culture and also to come into intimate contact with such persons as Prof. Patrick Geddes of Edinburgh University, Monsieur Jules Bois (whose guest he was), Père Hyacinthe, Mr. Hiram Maxim, Madame Calve, Madame Sarah Bernhardt, Princess Demidoff, and his own distinguished countryman, Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose, who had also come to attend the Congress and had thrilled the Western scientists with his wonderful scientific discoveries. Swamiji had so much admiration for Dr. Bose that he would frequently point out to his numerous friends the shining genius of this Indian savant whom he called "the pride and glory

of Bengal". After the sessions of the Congress had been over, Swamiji went to Brittany to become the guest of Mrs. Ole Bull in a lonely cottage she had taken at Lannion. Here in this solitary retreat Swamiji enjoyed some of the most pleasant days of his present itineracy in the West, in luminous conversations with his hostess and also with Sister Nivedita, who stayed with him for some time before she left for England to try to create interest in her work on behalf of Indian women.

Swamiji, after spending about three months in France, left for Egypt, visiting on the way Vienna, Constantinople and Athens. At the sight of the Sphinx and the Pyramids in Egypt, he went back in imagination to the glorious days of those Pharaohs who built up in the past a mighty Egyptian empire and made it one of the wonders of the world. But the ruins and the relics of the ancient material splendour only deepened in the Swami the sense of ephemerality of everything of this earthly existence and his mind became almost totally abstracted from his environment and began to soar towards wider horizons. It was in Egypt that he seemed to be turning the last pages of the book of his eventful career. It was here again that the Swami had a sudden flash before his mental vision that his devoted disciple and friend Mr. Sevier had given up his body in the far-off Himalayan monastery. This premonition so much upset the Swami that without waiting for a single day he boarded the first steamer for India. This time he sprang a pleasant surprise upon his *gurubhais* by arriving dressed in European clothes at the Belur Math late at night on December 9, 1900. The joy and excitement of the inmates of the Math knew no bounds when they discovered that the Shahib was none other than their beloved leader who had come back so unostentatiously and so suddenly in their midst.

This time Swamiji returned from the West with quite a different experience about the Occidental civilization and culture. During his first trip to the West, he was dazzled more by the outer glamour of its material greatness, organisational efficiency and scientific development, as also by the apparent democracy of America and Europe. But, in the course of his second journey, he gathered quite a contrary impression. He now discovered an insatiable greed for pelf and power and an unholy competition for self-aggrandisement in the West. He saw, to his horror, a hidden

tragedy, a pathetic weariness under the veil of forced expenditure of energy, a deep sorrow under the mask of frivolity. He said to Nivedita, "Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter ; but underneath it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface ; really it is full of tragic intensity . . . Here (in India) it is sad and gloomy on the surface, but underneath are carelessness and merriment."²⁵

At the Journey's End

On his arrival at the Belur Math Swami Vivekananda got a confirmation of his presentiment of the death of Capt. Sevier, which had occurred on October 28, 1900, during (Swamiji's) return voyage. Though the winter was particularly severe that year, Swamiji, accompanied by Swami Sivananda and Swami Sadananda, reached the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati on January 3, 1901, with great difficulty, amid the falling snow and the thick mist and clouds that enveloped the entire path and the surroundings. Mother Sevier and other inmates of the *Ashrama* welcomed the Swami with a mixed feeling of joy and sorrow. No doubt they were mightily delighted to see the Master in their midst, but the condition of his health caused a serious concern to them. They spared no pains to make his stay at the monastery as pleasant and comfortable as possible. The bewitching beauty of the Himalayan scenery, the soothing silence of the sequestered retreat coupled with the devoted service and loving care and kindness of the inmates of the monastery and Mother Sevier removed the fatigues of the journey, and he felt himself quite at home in that elevating atmosphere. But very soon he was painfully surprised to see that a shrine room containing the image of Sri Ramakrishna had been established at the *Ashrama* and that regular Puja was conducted in the shrine with ritualistic paraphernalia in contravention of the rules and regulations which he himself had formulated at the time of the establishment of the monastery for its guidance. Swamiji strongly condemned this introduction of ritualistic worship there, though private meditation, individual and collective study of the scriptures and the teaching of the highest spiritual monism were encouraged. Swamiji's uncompromising attitude in this regard had the desired effect, as it led to

the immediate discontinuance of worship and the abolition of the shrine also. After residing at the *Ashrama* for about fifteen days in illuminating spiritual discussion with the Mayavati brotherhood, he had to hasten down to the Belur Math on January, 24, 1901, as his asthma was greatly aggravated due to extreme severity of the cold of this Himalayan region.

The arrival of Swamiji at the Belur Math was a source of great rejoicing to his brother monks and his disciples. After taking rest for about two months at the Math and getting his health also a little recouped through close medical care, he started with his aged mother Bhubaneswari Debi on March 18, 1901, on a tour of pilgrimage to some holy places of East Bengal and Assam. They visited Langalbundh, Chandranath and Kamakhya, and also such places as Shillong, Dacca, and Deobhog, the birthplace of Saint Durgacharan Nag of hallowed memory, and came back to the Math in the second week of May. Swamiji resumed his normal activities in spite of his extremely bad health. He held enlightened discourses and scriptural classes for the well-being of the young inmates of the monastery and granted interviews to numerous visitors who flocked to the Belur Math from distant parts of India to pay homage to the great Swami and to draw spiritual inspiration from him. Though he instinctively felt that he was now at his journey's end, still he lived quite a jovial and care-free life in the Math and utilized every hour of the day in rendering service in some form or other to all who needed his guidance for spiritual uplift. He enforced discipline with a strong hand in spite of his physical sufferings, himself showing the way. He held Vedantic classes almost daily until his passing away to train the novices in the methods of meditation and also in the practice of spiritual austerities. He instilled in them a spirit of robust optimism, inspired them with virile self-confidence and looked into the strict observance of the rules and regulations governing the corporate life of the holy brotherhood.

The last days of Swamiji spent at the Belur Math revealed his monastic life in all its native beauty and artless simplicity. He was free as a *Sannyasin* placed far above all hide-bound conventions. Dressed in a *kaupin*, he would sometimes stroll on the grassy lawn, bare-footed and with a staff in hand, run and play like a merry child with a heterogeneous group of his pet

animals—the dog Bagha, the she-goat Hansi, the kid Matru, and an antelope, cows, ducks and geese. He would at times plant fruit trees, sow seeds for vegetables and take delight in horticultural work and in making experiments in cooking. But this jovial engagements notwithstanding, he always maintained an atmosphere of serene peace and sanctity in the monastery. Thus to the brother monks and the disciples, the Swami was a saint, leader, friend, and master—their all-in-all, and to the outside world,—the illustrious Swami Vivekananda who had taken the West by storm in the Parliament of Religions—a preacher, teacher and patriot in one.

In the latter part of the year 1901, he made elaborate arrangements for the worship of the Goddess Durga in the image at the Belur Math. It was solemnized with due *eclat* and appropriate *Shastric* rites and injunctions. The presence of the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, who was accommodated on this occasion temporarily in the garden-house of Nilambar Mookherjee, added to the solemnity and sacredness of the ceremony. The same year he observed the *Lakshmi Puja* and *Kali Puja* also at the Belur Math in strict accordance with *Shastric* rituals. The introduction of the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses in the monastery produced a very salutary effect inasmuch as the orthodox section of the Hindu society, who did not see eye to eye with the liberal ways of living and modes of work of the monks and their non-observance of the restrictions of caste, custom and food, heartily welcomed this ceremonial worship and the feeding of devotees and Daridra-Narayanas on such occasions, and gradually became staunch supporters of the humanitarian activities of this new Order of holy brotherhood. Swamiji's health went from bad to worse from day to day in spite of all precautions, and except for his brief visits to Buddha Gaya and Banaras in the company of Rev. Oda and Dr. Okakura of Japan, he had to keep himself confined to the Belur Math for reasons of health. As days rolled on and the final event of his life, the *Mahasamadhi*, drew nearer, his heart became full of the milk of divine compassion and he grew more and more enthusiastic about giving proper training to the new entrants in monastic life. In such an exalted mood was he at this period that his every utterance bespoke a tremendous spiritual consciousness. One day pointing to the Sannyasins and Brahmacharins who stood around him, he exclaimed,

"Where will you go to seek *Brahman*? He is immanent in all beings. Here, here is the visible *Brahman*! Shame on those who disregarding the visible *Brahman* set their minds on other things! Here is the *Brahman* before you as tangible as a fruit in one's hand! Can't you see! Here—here—here is the *Brahman*!" So forceful were these inspired words of the Swami that they instantly felt the living presence of *Brahman* and stood glued to the spot in deep meditation for nearly a quarter of an hour.

Towards the latter part of the year 1901 some Santal labourers were employed in digging the ground in the campus of the Belur Math. Swamiji who had profound love and sympathy for these poor Santals, served one day a hearty meal to them. When the feeding was over, he said to them with great reverence, "You are Narayanas; today I have entertained the Lord Himself by feeding you!" Thereafter turning to the Sannyasins and Brahmacharins of the Math, he said, "See how simple-hearted these poor illiterate people are! Can you mitigate their misery a little? If not, of what use is your wearing the *Gerua*? Sacrifice everything for the good of others—this is true *Sannyasa* . . . what should we care for homes, we who have made the tree our shelter? Alas! How can we have the heart to put a morsel to our mouths, when our countrymen have not enough wherewith to feed or clothe themselves!. . . Let us, throwing away all pride of learning and study of the *Shastras* and all *Sadhanas* for the attainment of personal *Mukti*, go from village to village devoting our lives to the service of the poor. Let us, through the force of our character and spirituality and our austere living, convince the rich man of his duty to the masses and induce him to give money for the service of the poor and the distressed. Alas! Nobody in our country thinks of the low, the poor and the miserable! These are the backbone of the nation, whose labour produces our food. Where is the man in our country who sympathises with them, who shares in their joys and sorrows!. . . Unless they are raised, this motherland of ours will never awake!. . . I see as clear as day light that the same *Brahman*, the same *Shakti* that is in me is in them as well! Only, there is a difference in the degree of manifestation—that is all. In the whole history of the world, have you ever seen a country rise without a free circulation of national blood throughout its entire body? If one limb is

paralysed, then even with the other limbs whole, not much can be done with that body—know this for certain. . . Your duty is to serve the poor and the distressed, without distinction of caste and creed. What business have you to think of the fruits of your action? Your duty is to go on working and every thing will follow of itself. My method of work is to construct, and not to destroy that which is already existing. . . Can't you give away one life for the sake of others? Let the reading of the *Vedanta* and the practising of meditation and the like be left for the next life! Let this body go in the service of others,—and then I shall know that your coming to me has not been in vain. . . After so much *Tapasya*, I have understood this as the highest Truth: 'God is present in every being. There is no other God besides that. He who serves all beings serves God indeed!'

This is but one of the many luminous instances of how he inspired others into a life of self-dedication and self-less service with the mighty flame burning within him. But this type of emotional outburst all the more seriously told upon his already shattered health. For some days he remained almost bed-ridden due to the aggravation of dropsy which resulted from his chronic diabetes. This alarmingly fast deterioration of his health cast a gloom over the whole monastery. But despite this serious ailment, the Swami did never desist from imparting instructions to his disciples in matters spiritual. He once beautifully explained the meaning of 'grace' as follows: "He who has realised the *Atman* becomes a store-house of great power. From him as the centre and within a certain radius emanates a spiritual force, and all those who come within this circle become animated with his ideas and are overwhelmed by them. Thus without much religious striving they inherit the results of his wonderful spirituality. This is grace."

Again, one morning Swamiji spoke in an inspired mood to his disciple Sarat Chandra Chakravorty about his future plan for the establishment of his much desired *Math* for women somewhere near Calcutta, on the banks of the Ganges, on the same line as the one for men, with the Holy Mother as its central figure and guiding spirit, so that *Brahmacharinis* and women teachers might be trained there to work for the regeneration of women in India. "As a fulfilment of this high-souled desire of the great Swami, a Women's Math under the name of Sri Sarada Math was inaugurated on

the 2nd December, 1954 on the occasion of the birth-centenary of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, on the bank of the Ganges, a little to the north of the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar. It is a happy augury that already a large number of well-educated young women of respectable families have joined this women's Math from different parts of India and dedicated their lives and undertaken works of social usefulness for the uplift of womanhood in and outside India under the banner of the great Master."²⁵

About this time Swamiji, though incapacitated by his illness to do any hard outdoor work, utilized his ample leisure in the study of the newly published edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. When told by his disciple, Sarat Chandra Chakravorty, that it was a Herculean task to go through all those twenty-five large volumes and to remember the contents thereof, the Swami who had already finished ten volumes and taken up the eleventh, replied with a mild surprise, "What do you mean? Ask me whatever you like from these ten volumes and I can tell you about it." The curiosity of the disciple was so much intrigued at the Master's words that he could not resist the temptation of asking him many difficult questions from different volumes, and his astonishment and admiration knew no bounds when the Swami did not only answer the questions with all technical details and exactitude but, in some cases, quoted the very language of the books! The Swami told the bewildered disciple that there was nothing miraculous about it. This kind of prodigious retentive power could be attained if one only observed the strictest *Brahmacharya* (continence). He further added, "For the lack of this *Brahmacharya*, we as a nation are becoming poorer and poorer in strength and intellect, and are losing our manhood."

About three months before his passing away, he became more and more insistent on the practice of meditation and austerities on the part of the novices and the enforcement of regularity and punctuality in all matters that vitally concerned their daily life. But at the same time, for the sake of recreation, he would very often sing or discourse with his *gurubhais* and give himself up to fun and merriment. And occasions were not wanting when in the midst of these conversations, his mind would suddenly

swing back to a meditative mood and his countenance would assume a dreamy far-away look. At times he would fly into a passion even at the slightest breach of discipline, reprimand the delinquents and adopt stringent possible measures, irrespective of personalities, to restore normalcy in the routine life of the monks and *Brahmacharins*. "Thus days passed as though they were hours. Whatever the mood in which the Swami might be, for his *gurubhais* and disciples his presence was in itself a constant source of joy and inspiration. Whether he was impatient, whether he reprimanded, whether he was exacting or unreasonable, whether he was the teacher or the meditating sage, whether he was full of mirth or grave, —to his *gurubhais* he was always the beloved "Naren", and to his disciples the blessed and incomparable *Guru*."²⁶

Mahasamadhi

Swamiji, who had by now got fully ready for the last great event of his earthly sojourn, felt a strong desire to see all his *Sannyasin* disciples, and himself wrote to them to come if possible for a short visit only. In response to this call, many of his disciples gathered round the Swami from distant parts of the world, though there were still others who could not meet their Master due to their serious preoccupations. But how unbearable and poignant was their grief when only a short while later they came to learn of the sudden demise of their beloved leader! Swamiji from now gradually withdrew himself from the task of personally guiding the affairs of the Math and granted others sufficient latitude to manage their works independently. For he emphatically said, "How often does a man ruin his disciples, by remaining always with them! When men are trained, it is essential that their leader leave them, for without his absence they cannot develop themselves!" Nobody could even then guess from his utterances that he would bid goodbye to them all, so soon. A few days before his final exit from the stage of the world, he asked his disciple, Swami Suddhananda, to bring him the Bengali calendar. Maybe Swamiji, turning over the pages of the almanac, mentally decided to pass in *Mahasamadhi* on Friday, the 4th of July, 1902, which however proved to be too true when that

great event actually occurred on that very date at ten minutes past nine p.m. Only three days before his passing away, Swamiji, while strolling on the spacious lawn of the Math in the afternoon in the company of his *gurubhai*, Swami Premananda, pointed to the spot where the present temple of the Swami stands, and gravely said, "When I give up the body, cremate it there!"

When the supreme day dawned, he looked more cheerful and vigorous, and was, as it were, altogether free from all physical ailments. He got up from bed early in the morning, and after taking his usual tea, entered the shrine, shut all windows and bolted the doors from within—an unusual phenomenon not witnessed for years during the whole period of his residence at the Math. He spent about three hours from eight to eleven in silent meditation inside the chapel. All on a sudden, he burst into a devotional song in praise of the Goddess Kali, the sweet strain of which filled the atmosphere of the monastery with ineffable peace and blessedness. When he came downstairs he was quite a different person altogether,—with his face flushed with spiritual emotion, eyes aflame with divine fire, and mind keyed up to the sublime pitch of devotional thought. In a mood of spiritual intoxication, Swamiji muttered to himself in an almost inaudible voice: "If there were another Vivekananda, he would have understood what Vivekananda has done! And yet—how many Vivekanandas shall be born in time!" This unguarded utterance of the Swami, which was overheard by Swami Premananda who was standing near by, startled him, as he did never hear such a remark escape the lips of the Swami before. That very day he took his dinner with his brother-monks and disciples in the refectory with great relish. After the repast, at about 1 p.m., he held a class on the *Laghukaumudi* (a standard book on Sanskrit grammar), which lasted for about three hours, and he was full of mirth and humour while explaining in the light of witty stories the underlying meaning of each aphorism. In the afternoon, Swamiji, though considerably fatigued due to his mental exertion for his long-drawn grammar class, went for a walk as far as the Belur Bazar in the company of Swami Premananda. In the course of the long walk, Swamiji spoke *inter alia* feelingly about his proposed scheme of founding a Vedic College in the monastery.

After returning from the walk, Swamiji took his seat in the verandah and talked merrily for a while with his *gurubhais* and disciples who were all about him. But with the setting of the sun, when the shadows of evening gradually descended on the earth and enveloped it with a thick pall of darkness, and the chapel-bell sounded for evening service in the shrine, all went to the temple to attend the *Aratrika*. Swamiji also repaired to his own room upstairs and asked the *Brahmacharin*, who followed him, to open all its windows to let in fresh air. He turned his eyes for a while towards Dakshineswar—the holy place redolent of the sweet reminiscences of the past, where he used to sit at the feet of the Master to receive his heartfelt love and benedictions,—looked wistfully at the blue firmament bespangled with myriads of glittering stars, listened with joy to the soft murmur of the swift-flowing Ganges in front, and felt refreshed at the soothing touch of the cool nocturnal breeze blowing at the time. Indeed, never was Nature so expectant and blissful as she was at this auspicious hour to get back in her lap her tired child who now, with the thin veil of Maya torn to shreds, waited for a final leap into the bosom of the Infinite at the premature age of thirtynine in fulfilment of his prophetic utterance, “I shall not live to be forty.” Immediately after the *Aratrika* when the whole atmosphere of the Math was steeped in perfect stillness, Swamiji with his rosary in hand sat in meditation in his room at 7 p.m., turning his face towards the Ganges, and remained in that state of spiritual absorption for nearly an hour. Thereafter, he laid himself down on the floor, and, calling the disciple who was waiting outside, asked him to fan his head a little. He had the rosary still in his hand. The disciple thought the Swami was perhaps having a light sleep. About an hour later, his hand shook a little. Then came two deep breaths. The disciple thought he had fallen into *Samadhi*. He then went downstairs and called a *Sannyasin*, who came and found on examination that there was neither respiration nor pulse. Meanwhile another *Sannyasin* came, and, thinking him to be in *Samadhi*, began to chant aloud the Master’s name continuously, but in no way was the *Samadhi* broken!’ The tired child now enjoyed eternal rest in the bosom of the Mother, whence there was no coming back once again to the realm of nescience.

Though the great Swami has broken the prison-walls of earthly existence

and soared beyond the grasp of Death in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, the words which he spoke long before his passing away, still ring in our ears with a profound significance. 'It may be', he said, 'that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God'. And verily his reassuring words have proved to be true. With the roll of years since his passing away, his message of peace and goodwill has been gathering momentum and securing from day to day a firm foothold in the citadel of human thought and action, and the conviction is growing in every heart that the spirit of Swamiji will not cease to function as a dynamic force in the society of mankind till the whole world attains to the realization of the Highest Truth.

Rightly has it been said by Romain Rolland: "The time is past for the pre-eminence of one incomplete and partial civilization. Asia and Europe, the two giants, are standing face to face as equals for the first time. If they are wise they will work together, and the fruit of their labours will be for all. This 'Greater India', this new India—whose growth politicians and learned men have, ostrich fashion, hidden from us and whose striking effects are now apparent—is impregnated with the soul of Ramakrishna. The twin star of the Paramahansa and the hero who translated his thought into action, dominates and guides her present destinies. Its warm radiance is the leaven working within the soil of India and fertilizing it. The present leaders of India: the king of thinkers, the king of poets, and the Mahatma—Aurobindo Ghose, Tagore, and Gandhi—have grown, flowered and borne fruits under the double constellation of the Swan and the Eagle . . . The time seems to me to have come for the rest of the world. . . to profit by it."²⁷

Om Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: INDIA AND AMERICA

Swami Vivekananda's spiritual mission to America, for which the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 furnished the impetus, fulfilled a deep-seated need of our times for the welfare of India, America, Europe, and humanity in general. What he preached has been slowly entering into the thought-current of both the East and the West.

The immediate compelling purpose of his visit was the improvement of the material condition of Indian humanity. His wide travel in India as a wandering monk after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, his intimate contact with people of all classes—high and low, educated and illiterate, maharajas and pariahs—revealed to his highly sensitive mind the pitiable condition of the Indian masses. They lacked the basic needs of food, education, health, and economic security. The descendants of the once proud Indo-Aryans, whose achievements in religion, philosophy, literature, art, science, and the evolution of an enduring social system still draw the admiration of thoughtful people everywhere, were grovelling in the dust. Forgetful of their inner strength, they had become the target of exploitation of the rich and the powerful—both indigenous and foreign. "It is for them," Swami Vivekananda said to his devotees in Madras, "that I am going to the West—for the people and the poor." To two of his brother disciples he remarked in the same strain: "I travelled all over India. But, alas, it was agony to me, my brothers, to see with my own eyes the terrible poverty of the masses, and I could not restrain my tears. It is now my firm conviction that to preach religion among them, without first trying to remove their poverty and suffering, is futile. It is for this reason—to find means for the salvation of the poor of India—that I am going to America."

Night after night he spent without sleep, brooding over India's problems. Many other ideas came to his mind. First and foremost, he realized that religion was not the cause of India's downfall. On the contrary, it was religion which created and stabilized the Indian culture, integrated the divergent elements in the nation, and preserved the Hindus from total

disintegration in spite of ruthless domination for nearly a thousand years by alien rulers, giving people the patience and fortitude to remain calm in the vicissitudes of fortune. No amount of poverty could take away their faith in Dharma and Providence. Secondly, he saw that India would rise again through religion, occupy her rightful place in the comity of nations, and fulfil the expectation of many Western people: *Ex Oriente lux*. How well it has since been recognized that the modern revival of India started from Dakshineswar.

Thirdly, Swami Vivekananda realized that the fundamental truths of Hinduism could be resuscitated by an intense study of the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and other secondary writings. The ignorance of the people regarding these basic works made it possible for unscrupulous priests to exercise their power over them. This also accounted for the encrustations of the eternal truths of Hinduism with many superstitions. The ancient wisdom must be made accessible to the ignorant and the educated alike.

Fourthly, the great Swami clearly saw that no philosophy or religion could be understood if the stomach was empty and the body sick. Everyone needs a certain amount of protein and carbohydrate for higher thinking. How to build the sound body and mind through which spiritual truths could be manifested? His insight at once told him that this could be done with the help of science and technology, which had been highly developed in the West during the past three hundred years. The method of science based upon reasoning, experimentation, observation and verification would enable Indians to understand rationally the nature of the physical universe. By means of technology they would apply these scientific truths for the material welfare of the individual and society. The Swami felt he must go to the West and appeal to its conscience. He would tell the people of the West that the sickness and health of India were the concern of the whole world.

But Swami Vivekananda was a proud man. He hated begging. He would not go to the West as a beggar. His penetrating mind realized the plight of the West; though of another kind, it was no less poignant. Science and technology no doubt gave the West material prosperity, but they did not

give it inner peace. A materialistic culture contains the seeds of its own destruction. In a competitive society, clamouring for material gain, brother raises his hand against brother. The West must deepen its spiritual outlook, and in this it could be helped by the ancient wisdom of India. Hinduism, Swami Vivekananda thought, could especially teach the West universal compassion, the ideal of seeing unity in diversity, and the harmony of religions.

The Swami clearly recognized the achievements and limitations of the culture of both East and West. The Indian climate has, it is true, produced a Buddha, a Sankara, a Chaitanya, a Ramakrishna—something which perhaps it alone can do ; but Indian history also reveals the tragic fact of how high an individual can rise and how low a nation can fall. The history of the West, too, reveals the fact that a nation as a whole can attain, through science and technology, a high level of physical comfort and intellectual knowledge, but in the absence of knowledge regarding God, the soul, and the spiritual basis of the universe, it can become a victim of anxiety, fear, and suspicion. India has no doubt discovered many eternal spiritual truths, but she has kept them buried in heaps of filth. There is no appropriate jewel box to preserve them. The West has created a jewel box in the form of a wonderful social, political, and economic organization, but where are the jewels? India often worships a phantom in the name of a soul, and the West a corpse from which the spirit has fled. Thus Swami Vivekananda keenly felt that both the West and India needed each other for their mutual welfare and for the ultimate good of humanity. His message was both national and international. His expanding soul could not be cribbed or confined in any narrow cage.

Swami Vivekananda chose America as the place to give his message. The United States appeared to him suitable for this purpose. Making America his base, he would carry his work to Europe. In his journey to Chicago he received the blessings of both Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother. He did not have the support of money, or government, or any organization. This lad of barely thirty, totally inexperienced in the ways of the world, had spent the formative period of his life either at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna or as an unknown wandering monk, practising meditation and prayer.

He had received encouragement from a handful of admirers ; a prince who was his disciple supplied him with the passage, the clothes, and some pocket money. But Swami Vivekananda carried with him, besides his knowledge of Western and Indian history and culture, a warm heart, which endeared him to sincere and broad-minded people in the West. Needless to say, his deep spiritual experiences were his most priceless asset.

Sri Ramakrishna, while he was alive, pointed out to his beloved disciple the mission of his life. Once when young Narendranath was eager to forget himself and the world in *samadhi*, the Master asked him why he was anxious to see God with eyes closed and not with open eyes, adding that service to men, in all its forms, was the best way to worship God. After the Master's death, the young Swami resolved many a time to spend the rest of his life in a mountain cave in contemplation, but every time he went into solitude for this purpose, he was thrown out, as it were, by a powerful force. Evidently his was not to be a life of exclusive meditation. No doubt a part of his mind, like that of his Master, soared above the world, but another part bled at the sight of human suffering. It seldom found a point of rest in its oscillation between contemplation of God and service to man. "May I be born and reborn," he once exclaimed, "and suffer a thousand miseries, if only I may worship the only God in whom I believe: the sum total of all souls, and above all, my God the wicked, my God the afflicted, my God the poor of all races." It appears that in obedience to a higher call he chose service to man as his mission on earth, and this choice endeared him to people in the West, the Americans in particular.

At the time of the Swami's visits to the West, no two countries showed such diverse characteristics as India and America. The United States was free and democratic ; India was a colony of England. In America, education was universal ; in India, barely ten per cent of the people could read and write. Americans were affluent and prosperous ; ninety per cent of the Indians hardly ate a square meal. America, following the Anglo-Saxon tradition, upheld the ideal of social justice and individual rights, especially for white Americans ; Hindus were oppressed by the tyranny of caste, priestcraft, and wealthy landlords. American women enjoyed a social free-

dom which was denied to their Indian sisters. In America religion, government, science, and technology were harnessed to promote the welfare of the masses ; in India the power of religion and the social system was often used to keep the masses down. Indian culture developed a high degree of intellect. Americans were sentimental. Hindus were imaginative and speculative, Americans pragmatic and practical. The general trend of American philosophy was a revolt against the nineteenth-century romanticism of Europe. In American education science and technology played an important part ; in Indian universities science was studied for a limited purpose mostly in its theoretical aspect. Following the tradition of the frontier days, Americans, as a rule, were adventurous, alert, resourceful, and given to improvisation. Hindus were generally static in their thinking. The atmosphere of India, even during the worst period of material setback, produced saints and mystics given to contemplation. The American soul expressed itself through action. Buddha, Krishna, Sankara, Chaitanya, and Ramakrishna are still among the national heroes of India ; a successful man of the world is admired by the American public. Western science investigated the nature of the universe in order to find man's place in it and acquire power to enhance his physical welfare ; Indian philosophers, through the study of the universe, realized its ultimate unreality and directed their minds to the exploration of the inner world. The above characterization may be somewhat oversimplified, but it is none the less substantially true.

Within a few days of his arrival in America, Swami Vivekananda became aware of her general world outlook. What tumultuous thoughts must have raced through the mind of this mendicant monk from India when he sat on the platform of the Parliament of Religions facing seven thousand men and women representing what was best and noblest in the American culture ! He saw the Occidental mind to be young, alert, restless, inquisitive, tremendously honest, well disciplined, and at ease with the physical universe, but sceptical about the profundities of the supersensuous world and unwilling to accept any truth without rational proof and pragmatic tests. Behind him lay the ancient world of India, with its diverse creeds and rituals woven into a complex religio-philosophical system called

Hinduism, whose principal concept was unity in diversity ; with its saints and prophets, who investigated reality through self-control, non-attachment, and contemplation, unruffled by the passing events of the transitory mundane existence, and were absorbed in meditation on the eternal verities. The Swami's education, upbringing, and personal experience seem to have made him the confluence of these two streams of thought whose apparent conflict he sought to remove.

Perhaps at the outset Swami Vivekananda was a little bewildered. Certainly he was seized with stage-fright and postponed his address several times. But as soon as he mounted the rostrum, he felt at ease. Even his first few words, "Sisters and Brothers of America," evoked spontaneous applause from the whole audience that took two full minutes to subside. People were deeply moved to see, at last, a person who discarded formalities and addressed them in a natural way, showing the warmth of his heart. Swami Vivekananda's colourful personality, his orange robe, yellow turban, and youthful face through which might be seen a mature mind, could not but impress the audience. Perhaps he was the youngest among the representatives of the great religions of the world, being only thirty years old.

What Swami Vivekananda said at the Parliament of Religions and at numerous meetings afterwards is now mostly on record. Through his lectures, conversations, and writings he tried not only to remove the colossal ignorance of the Americans regarding Hinduism and India, almost entirely created by Christian missionaries and the idle gossip of travellers, but also to present the positive truths of his ancient religion.

In his opening address the Swami spoke about the validity of all religions as means to reach the same goal of perfection, and in his final speech he asked the religions to give up their claim to exclusive salvation. He wanted every religion to inscribe on its banner: "Help and not fight," "Assimilation and not destruction," "Harmony and peace and not dissension." This noble concept, which was propounded in the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the *Bhagavad Gita*, was ably demonstrated by his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, who was the only prophet in recorded history to practise the disciplines of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam and to realize that all of them, through

their different rituals and beliefs, brought out the potential divinity of human nature.

In his numerous lectures delivered throughout the American continent, Swami Vivekananda continually stressed the divinity of the soul, the oneness of existence, the non-duality of the Godhead, and the harmony of religions. In his doctrine of the divinity of the soul, perceptive Americans found the spiritual basis of freedom and respect for others, highly treasured by them. The concept of oneness of existence, which is the principal teaching of *Vedanta*, was the spiritual basis of love and such ethical injunctions as fellowship and compassion. Through the realization of this oneness one could get rid of fear, suspicion, hatred, and malice. Through the knowledge that God is one without a second and that the same Godhead is the goal of all faiths, religion could give up bigotry and fanaticism, which, more than anything else, have made it an object of criticism for all rational people. Swami Vivekananda taught *Vedanta*, which in the final analysis is neither religion nor philosophy but an experience, though it accepts both as suited to the different levels of spiritual evolution. Not created by any mind, it is based upon eternal and immutable laws, coeval with the creation, and discovered by the insight of illumined souls in the depths of their contemplation. But *Vedanta* also recognizes Prophets and Incarnations as the demonstrators of eternal truths. *Vedanta* gives the *rationale* of rituals, which are the concretization of abstract spiritual truths, necessary for mental concentration. Mythology illustrates philosophy through stories of legendary or semi-historical personages, helps in the development of devotion, and enriches literature, sculpture, painting, and architecture. In Swami Vivekananda's view science, philosophy, or art, if pursued to the end, gives one the vision of the Infinite, provided one accepts the Vedantic concept of the oneness of existence.

Swami Vivekananda's instructions for the development of spiritual consciousness can be summed up in the word *yoga*, which means the union of the individual soul and the Universal Soul, called God, and also the method to realize that union. His approach was psychological. Taking into consideration the four broad divisions of the human mind, he taught the *yoga* of divine love (*bhakti-yoga*), the *yoga* of work (*karma-yoga*), the *yoga* of

philosophical knowledge (*jnana-yoga*), and the *yoga* of the suppression of the modifications of the mind (*raja-yoga*). He wrote four classic books on these four *yogas*. They are all based on the solid foundation of moral life, without which no spiritual experience is possible. The special reason for the Swami's explaining *raja-yoga*, which he asked people not to practise without the guidance of a competent teacher, seems to be that he wanted to accept the challenge of the Western intellectuals who demanded proof of religious experiences. The teaching of *raja-yoga*, he contended, was based upon experimentation and verification of the result. Besides describing *raja-yoga* in his book, the Swami taught it to qualified students in person.

Swami Vivekananda explained to Americans that religion was realization and experience, not mere acceptance of dogmas and creeds, and that a man could suppress his lower desires and realize his divine nature in this life. He always reminded them of the divinity of the soul and the unity of existence. In order to bring out this divinity one might follow any *yoga* suited to one's temperament. Scriptures, temples, and rituals were of secondary importance.

In the final session of the Parliament he made a grand appeal for the harmony of religious faiths. He said: "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor is a Buddhist or a Hindu to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. If the Parliament has shown anything to the world, it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart."

Never in the course of his preaching did Swami Vivekananda condemn the true spirit of any religion, though he bitterly attacked hypocrisy and false appearance. In the Parliament of Religions he really stood as a champion of all religions and not just as a preacher of Hinduism. A Jewish intellectual who had attended the Parliament said later to the present

writer: "After hearing Swami Vivekananda I realized that my religion was also true." The Swami's admiration for Jesus Christ was unbounded. Even before his appearance at the Parliament, when he had been suffering from acute poverty, he wrote to a worried friend in India: "I am here amongst the children of the Son of Man, and the Lord Jesus will help me." He began his famous seminar at Thousand Island Park with a quotation from the Gospel of St. John, as his students belonged to the Christian faith. But he was intolerant of what is often preached in the name of Christianity, especially by missionaries abroad. Bigoted Christians in America, the missionaries, and their patrons savagely attacked Swami Vivekananda, often traducing his personal character. He was equally blunt in his rejoinder. In a speech given in Detroit, he declared angrily: "You train and educate and clothe and pay men to do what?—to come over to my country and abuse all my forefathers, my religion, my everything. They walk near a temple and say, 'You idolaters, you will go to hell.' But the Hindu is mild; he smiles and passes on, saying, 'Let the fools talk.' And then you, who train men to abuse and criticize, if I touch you with the least bit of criticism but with the kindest purpose, you shrink and cry: 'Do not touch us! We are Americans; we criticize, curse, and abuse all the heathens of the world, but do not touch us, we are sensitive plants.' And whenever your missionaries criticize us, let them remember this: If all India stands up and takes all the mud that lies at the bottom of the Indian Ocean and throws it up against the Western countries, it will not be doing an infinitesimal part of what you are doing to us."

Referring to the part played by the missionaries in the colonial adventures of some of the European nations, Swami Vivekananda said:

"Such things tumble down; they are built upon sand; they cannot remain long. Everything that has selfishness for its basis, competition for its right hand, and enjoyment as its goal, must die sooner or later.

"If you want to live, go back to Christ. You are not Christians. No, as a nation you are not. Go back to Christ. Go back to him who had nowhere to lay his head. Yours is a religion preached in the name of luxury. What an irony of fate! Reverse this if you want to live; reverse this. You cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time. All this prosperity—all this

from Christ! Christ would have denied all such heresies. If you can join these two, this wonderful prosperity with the ideal of Christ, well and good; but if you cannot, better go back to him and give up these vain pursuits. Better be ready to live in rags with Christ than to live in palaces without him."

Swami Vivekananda could not stomach one major doctrine of Christianity, namely the doctrine of sin. It was repulsive to the very basis of *Vedanta*, which calls all men "Children of Immortality." The Swami called sins mistakes due to ignorance. Mountain-high sin is reduced to ashes the moment the fire of divine knowledge is lighted. No soul can ever be tied down to the earth. How can a so-called sinner, in whom also the light of God shines though he may not be aware of it for the time being, be condemned for ever to hell-fire? Does not every sinner have a future, as every saint has a past?

When Swami Vivekananda's heart was at its most expansive he would say: "Buddhas and Christs are mere waves in the infinite Ocean of Existence that I am", or, "I do not want to Hinduize the world or to Christianize it; but I want to My-ize the world, that's all."

How did America respond to Swami Vivekananda and his teachings? Hundreds of meetings that he addressed were attended by, among others, professors from universities, ladies of good families, seekers of truth, and devotees of God with childlike faith. But mixed with these were curiosity-seekers, idlers, vagabonds, and charlatans. The American public, by and large, is receptive and gullible. That is why this country is a hotbed of various religious monstrosities. There were many weird people among the Swami's audience. He had to face all kinds of obstacles. The opposition of the Christian vested interests has already been mentioned. The leaders of many crankish, selfish, and fraudulent organizations tried to induce the Swami to embrace their causes, first by promises of support, and then by threats of injury when he refused their offers. He was also challenged by many so-called free-thinkers, among whom were atheists, agnostics, rationalists, and materialists. But the Swami was not to be intimidated—"The sickle had hit on a stone," as the Polish proverb says. To all opposition the Swami's only answer was: "I stand for truth. Truth will never ally

itself with falsehood. Even if the whole world should be against me, truth must prevail at the end."

Swami Vivekananda was a "cyclonic" lecturer. But he often got tired of people, excitement, and lectures. A born philosopher and a lover of God, he wanted to train a few serious students in *Vedanta*, who would broadcast his ideas. He felt disgusted to bring himself down to suit anybody's or any audience's fad.

But the Swami's personality was irresistible, whether one agreed with him or not. Those who came in contact with him could not forget him. Even today after over half a century one meets with people who saw or heard him perhaps once or twice. They cherish that memory. How many people are moved today by merely reading his words! Romain Rolland said: "His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports, must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero."

Swami Vivekananda came to know many notables in the Western world: Max Müller, Paul Deussen, Robert Ingersoll, Nikola Tesla, William Thomson (afterwards Lord Kelvin), Sarah Bernhardt, Madame Emma Calvé. He was, however, deeply moved by the generous nature of the American people. A few of his devoted friends cheerfully assumed responsibility for his personal comfort. He was particularly impressed, as we shall see later on, by the warm affection of American women. Though he often admired the friendship and steady loyalty of the British, the artistic sensitivity of the French, the philosophical acumen of the Germans, and the various cultural monuments of Europe, yet his heart seemed to be devoted to America. In one of his letters written to an American woman devotee in May 1896, he said: "I love the Yankee land. I like to see new things. I do not care a fig to loaf about old ruins and mope a life out about old histories and keep sighing about the ancients. I have too much vigour in my blood for that. In America is the place, the people, the opportunity, for everything new. I have become horribly radical."

The full effect of Swami Vivekananda's teachings in America will be known only in years to come. Even now one can see a healthy beginning in the spread of Vedantic ideas. Vedanta societies in many of the major cities of America and retreats under the spiritual guidance of Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order of monks are disseminating the truths of Hinduism. They are helping in the spiritual development of individuals. American monks and nuns have joined the Ramakrishna Order and taken the vows of poverty and chastity. Books about Hinduism are being published. The Swamis are often invited to universities, colleges, churches, and other cultural organizations to discuss the ancient wisdom of India. Slowly Hindu ideas and ideals are entering into American minds. What the representatives of other faiths said at the Parliament of Religions has been practically forgotten. But the teachings of *Vedanta* are growing in volume and intensity.

One often wonders how it is that Americans responded so warmly to Swami Vivekananda's message and that the seeds sown by him are bearing fruit in the new world. To an Oriental, Americans appear to be sunny and shallow, noisy and naïve. Their outlook on life is secular and materialistic. The prevailing philosophy of America is naturalism, pragmatism, empiricism, or logical positivism. Most of the Protestant and liberal churches preach a this-worldly religion and an ethics tinged with emotion. Ministers generally tell their congregation how to utilize God for happiness in this world. The Fundamentalists, especially in the Bible Belt of the South, often harp on the concepts of sin, hell-fire, and damnation. People go to church because they want to *belong* to some organization, to be told what is right and what is wrong, to conform to an accepted norm of society, or to prepare the way to heaven after death. Church services consist, in the main, of a sermon, prayers, and the singing of hymns. Both prayer and meditation are congregational in nature. To a Hindu, the standing up, bowing of the head, and kneeling down, all done by the congregation as a whole, savour of a sort of military discipline. Though he does so in church, it is doubtful if the average Christian practises any meditation or prayer at home. An atmosphere of reverence pervades the church services. A Hindu misses in the church the spontaneity and devotional fervour of a

temple. Generally Protestant Christians are shy about their religious feelings and feel embarrassed if someone speaks to them about God or the soul. Most of the churches have, besides divine services, social functions to attract people. They have also foreign missions to which the members contribute generously, to save the souls of the heathen as well as to bring the material benefits. In short, religion in America does not seem to fill the serious moments of life, which are generally given to business or politics.

But this is by no means the whole truth. Religion and the idealism inspired by it have played an important part in the creation of American culture and in its subsequent development. Certain spiritual concepts later presented by Swami Vivekananda had already begun to ferment underneath the robust, picturesque, gay, and dynamic surface of American life. The ideals of freedom, equality, and fellow-feeling had always stirred American hearts. To these ideals, which Americans applied in politics and society for their material welfare, Swami Vivekananda gave a spiritual interpretation.

It is well known that the Pilgrim Fathers who crossed the Atlantic in the "Mayflower" and landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts, in the chilly November of 1620, and faced a strange people and uncongenial nature, were English people who had first left England and gone to Holland for freedom of worship. Later they were joined by other dissenters who could not submit to the restrictions placed upon their religious beliefs by the English rulers of the time. They were the forebears of the sturdy, religious-minded New Englanders who, two centuries later, were the leaders of the intellectual spiritual culture of America. Swami Vivekananda found among them some of his loyal and enthusiastic followers. Many of the Huguenots, too, who had left France in the seventeenth century, later went to America and found religious asylum there.

Both the Holy Bible and the philosophy of John Locke influenced the Bill of Rights and the American Constitution. Jefferson, imbued with the ideal of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men, and also agnostic Benjamin Franklin and atheistic Thomas Paine, penned the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, which clearly sets forth its political philosophy, namely, the equality of men before God,

society, and the law, and waged an uncompromising war against tyranny. The same passion for social equality and justice was later to permeate the utterances of the great Lincoln, and the New Deal and the four Freedoms of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The foreign aid programme of the present administration may be inspired by an enlightened self-interest, but it shows the spirit of the proverbial American generosity. The very structure of the American Federal Government is opposed to the colonial system of the European powers. American society is free, in a remarkable degree, from the tyranny of the caste system of India or the class system of Europe. Here almost every citizen enjoys a minimum standard of social security, and no limitation is placed in the way of his material success provided he is intelligent, ethical, and industrious.

During the first hundred years after her gaining independence, America produced a galaxy of men, great in various fields: politics and war, law and jurisprudence, science and technology, history and literature, business and practical affairs. With their aid and in the absence of foreign wars, America gained an unprecedented material prosperity. The country's vast hidden wealth was tapped. Towns grew into cities. Ambition stirred everywhere and men's very manners changed with the new haste and energy that swept them on.

Material prosperity was accompanied by a new awakening of men's minds and consciousness. Jails were converted into penitentiary systems based upon humanitarian principles, and anti-slavery societies were inaugurated. During the five years between 1850 and 1855 were published some of the greatest books in American literature, such as *Leaves of Grass*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and *Moby Dick*, hardly surpassed in imaginative vitality. The crude frontier days were fast disappearing.

Meanwhile India entered into the rapidly growing thought-current of nineteenth-century America and contributed her share, however small. India and America had not been complete strangers. Everybody knows that Columbus set out to find a short route to India and stumbled upon America instead. What is not so well known is the fact that the chests of tea of the Boston Tea Party, which set off the War of Independence, came from India. Moreover, the victory of the English over the French during

the eighteenth century in the war for the domination of India by the two great colonial powers made it easy for England to withdraw from America, and thus helped the American colonists in their struggle for freedom begun in 1775. Again, Commodore Perry made it possible, in 1853, for American merchant ships to trade with the Far East and then visit coastal towns on their long journeys.

In the cultural side, the Transcendental movement, of which Emerson was the leader, and Thoreau, Channing, Whittier, and Alcott, his associates, brought spiritual India into contact with the new continent. Emerson, a keen student of the *Bhagavad Gita*, was familiar with the Upanishadic doctrines, as evidenced by his beautiful poem "Brahma" and his essay "The Over-Soul." Thoreau, Emerson's neighbour for twenty-five years, read and discussed with him the Hindu religious classics. "I bathe my intellect," wrote Thoreau, "in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gitá*, in comparison with which our modern world and literature seem to be puny and trivial." Alcott was instrumental in bringing out the American edition of Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*. The Transcendental Club, founded in Concord, near Boston, reached its height by 1840. The American Oriental Society was established in 1842. Walt Whitman (1819-1892), whom Swami Vivekananda once called "the sannyásin of America," wrote about the identity of living beings and seems to have come very near to Vedantic idealism. There is, however, no evidence to show that he was influenced by Hindu thought. A great religious individualist, he was free from all church conventions and creeds. To him religion consisted entirely of inner illumination, "the secret silent ecstasy." It should be noted, further, that the Unitarian religious movement of New England was encouraged by Raja Rammohan Roy of India.

Both Emerson and Thoreau dreamt about a marriage of East and West that would usher in a new culture, a new step in human progress. But for various reasons this marriage did not immediately take place. India came under the rule of the British crown in 1858. In America the Gold Rush of 1849 and the discovery of other fabulous resources underground, such as coal, oil, and iron, diverted people's attention to new directions. Then there was the Civil War, in which brother fought against brother and the worst

passions of human minds were let loose. It preserved the Union but destroyed the aristocratic society of the South, especially in Virginia, which was once called the mother of American Presidents. The slaves were emancipated and the Yankees of the North began to pour in to capture economic fields.

The publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 made a greater impression in America than in Europe. Intellectual people's religious convictions were profoundly disturbed. Technology developed more rapidly in the United States than on the Continent. All these waves, coming one after another, turned American thought into new channels. During the rude frontier days, when America was comparatively poor, she somehow preserved her spiritual sensitivity. But during and after the Civil War the idea of possessing "bigger and better" things cast its spell everywhere. Big utilities and corporations came into existence ; the idealistic and romantic glow of the first century of American independence degenerated into the sordidness of competitive materialistic life ; while the unceasing flow of immigrants from Europe made the stabilization of American culture difficult.

Emerson and Whitman were disillusioned by the aftermath of the Civil War. But the innate idealism and religious consciousness of the Americans could not be destroyed either by the triumph of science or by material prosperity. Thoughtful Americans began to look for a philosophy which could harmonize the diverse claims of science, humanism, and mystical experience. The philosophy of *Vedanta* preached by Swami Vivekananda seemed to show the way, at least to some, to this reconciliation. Perhaps this accounts for the spontaneous welcome received by this representative of Hinduism in 1893 and afterwards.

Americans are by no means irreligious people. By and large they are God-fearing. They go to church and respect holiness. Even in a remote village there are two or more churches of different denominations. Though in America Church and State are separate, the country is by no means a secular one. The American currency bears the inscription: "In God We Trust". Statesmen and public leaders often speak of America as a Christian country, in spite of the fact that a powerful section of her citizens is non-

Christian. Congress, like the British Parliament, opens with a prayer from the official chaplain, and the Presidents of the United States attend church services on Sundays. Most colleges and universities have chapel services in which the students and the faculty members join. At the inauguration of the President of the United States, divine blessings are invoked. It may be true, however, that the Christianity preached from the pulpits does not have the dimensions and depths of Hinduism. Many Christian dogmas and creeds are legacies from the Middle Ages or an even earlier period, and therefore do not satisfy rational Western people, some of whom have been looking around for new spiritual inspiration. Again, Christianity does not, like Hinduism, emphasize meditation and introspection, though there are contemplative Orders in the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant churches in general are becoming humanistic in outlook and feel shy of mystical experience. Moreover, Christianity, like any other religion which accepts the Personal God as ultimate reality, believes in the doctrine of exclusive salvation. The religious feeling of a good Christian generally finds expression through moral life and humanitarian activities. People often go to church to supplicate for worldly benefits, such as relief from sickness or success in a mundane undertaking. Naturally, a Vedantic misses in Christianity the concept of liberation by the knowledge of *Atman* or *Brahman* gained through the practice of such disciplines as renunciation, chastity, truthfulness, and unselfish love. But the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity and the desire for wealth and relief from physical afflictions are seen in popular Hinduism as well. A real *jnani*, who sees all created beings as manifestations of the pure spirit, is rare indeed, though the ideal of *moksha* or liberation, as taught by the scriptures and prophets like Krishna and Buddha, is cherished by Hindus as the ultimate goal of life. One must not judge the spiritual endeavour of the American people by the standard set up by a Buddha or a Ramakrishna, who are too lofty for most religious aspirants anywhere. Often students come to the Vedantist Swamis in America with a sincere longing for inner illumination, and the present writer, for one, feels humble in their presence. No ; Americans are by no means irreligious, though their religious ideals and disciplines are different from those of the Hindus.

Swami Vivekananda was not unaware of the materialistic aspect of Western society, which was especially encouraged by the rapid growth of science, technology, and industrialism. Similarly he was conscious of the evil elements in Hindu society and criticized them bitterly. He warned the West of imminent catastrophe, and his ominous prophecy that it was sitting on the crater of a smouldering volcano came true within fifty years of his death, with the two great world wars. In the following poem, hitherto unpublished in English, which he wrote on board a ship while passing through the Mediterranean Sea on his way back to India from his last visit to America, he hints of his mental distress caused by the sensate culture of the West and also of his nostalgic yearning for the peace of India.

ON THE SEA'S BOSOM

In blue sky floats a multitude of clouds—
White, black, of many shades and thicknesses ;
An orange sun, about to say farewell,
Touches the massed cloud-shapes with streaks of red.

The wind blows at it lists, a hurricane
Now carving shapes, now breaking them apart :
Fancies, colours, forms, inert creations—
A myriad scenes, though real, yet fantastic.

There light clouds spread, heaping up spun cotton,
See next a huge snake, then a strong lion ;
Again, behold a couple locked in love.
All vanish, at last, in the vapoury sky.

Below, the sea sings a varied music,
But not grand, O India, nor ennobling :
Thy waters, widely praised, murmur serene
In soothing cadence, without a harsh roar.

Day in and day out Swami Vivekananda exhorted America and Europe to realize the unsubstantiality of the physical world, to give up greed and

lust for power, to go back to God, and cultivate universal charity. *Azad*, or spiritual freedom, was the recurring topic of his lectures and discourses.

Most of the Swami's years abroad were spent in America. There he worked incessantly, truly "burning his candle at both ends." Often tired of the hectic life in the competitive American society, he longed for India. In 1897 he returned to his beloved Motherland. What impressions did he carry to India from his foreign experiences and how did he try to incorporate them into Indian life for its betterment?

The compelling purpose of his visit to America was not immediately fulfilled. He did not bring with him either money or knowledge of science and technology for the improvement of the condition of the Indian masses. India was still under the domination of an alien power. Political conditions were not favourable for foreign aid on a vast scale. But half a century after the Swami's visit, when India became free, his dream showed signs of fulfilment. India has been sending thousands of students to the New World and Europe to acquire advanced knowledge of science and technology. American money is being spent to improve the material condition of the people. On the other hand, Americans have also welcomed with affection and respect Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order to guide them in their spiritual life.

Swami Vivekananda carried with him many precious memories of America: memory of sweet friendships, unflinching devotion, and warm appreciation; the memory of a society based on the ideals of equality, justice, and freedom, where a man—in sad contrast with India—was given every opportunity to develop his highest potentialities; the memory of the refinement attained by many people in intellectual knowledge, human relationships, and artistic taste; the memory of common men enjoying a high standard of living and their well-earned prosperity, unimaginable in any other part of the world; the memory of the American mind, alert, inquisitive, daring, and receptive. He saw in America, in her men of letters, of wealth, and of position, sparks of spirituality which kindled at his magic words. He was impressed to see the generous confidence and richness of heart manifested through the pure and candid souls who gave themselves to him once they recognized him as a trustworthy and honourable man;

who became slaves of his love and did not shrink from the highest sacrifice to help in the fulfilment of his mission.

America gave Swami Vivekananda his first recognition, and he was aware of it. She gave him this priceless asset to help him in his herculean work in India—an authority which, it appears, he did not have before in the land of his birth. Though he came to America as a giver, he now, in a sense, returned to India as a gift from the New World. The wisdom of India which he planted in the heart of the English-speaking world, in New York and London, started the building of the spiritual bridge between East and West of which Swami Vivekananda dreamt.

The Swami returned to India on January 15, 1897, and received a hero's welcome. He at once set himself to the task of planning for the country's regeneration. Till the hour of his death in 1902, he worked without respite, in spite of broken health, addressing numerous meetings from Colombo to Almora, organizing the Ramakrishna Mission and guiding its members in their spiritual practices, starting various relief activities, and giving instruction to many spiritual seekers. The awakening of the country from the slumber of ages became his most absorbing passion.

Swami Vivekananda once spoke of himself as a "condensed India." His adoration of India was not, however, the idolatry of geography. He loved India, where his ancestors had developed great ideas about the nature of the soul and God and followed the disciplines of renunciation and service. The soul of the mystical Orient, India was his "playground of childhood, pleasure garden of youth, and Varanasi of old age." His love of India was not confined merely to the glories of the past, but expressed itself equally through his warm sympathy for present-day Indians, oppressed and hungry. He regarded himself as brother to all Indians, including the illiterate, the untouchable and the poor.

With the clear vision of a prophet the Swami realized that religion would play a vital part in the creation of the new India, and that it would be her mission to the world. An aggressive Hinduism, inspired by the Vedantic ideal of the divinity of the soul, would give Indians faith in themselves and remove the inferiority complex from which no Hindu who has received English education but is ignorant of the spiritual heritage of India is

immune. By focussing the national energy on science, technology and, industrialization, in order to catch up with Europe and America, and neglecting her spiritual culture, India would be at best a poor imitation of the West. Unlike many of our modern leaders, he did not condemn India's past ; on the other hand he exhorted the Indians to build the superstructure of future progress on the solid foundation of past achievements. He knew very well that a man who wants to see far into the future of his country must look far into its past.

It is unrealistic to condemn a culture for three centuries of failure, forgetting its achievements of three thousand years. India is a Hindu country, in the sense that Egypt is Islamic, Burma is Buddhist, England and America are Christian. This is true for India in a deeper sense than for these other countries, because the Hindus have always shown respect to all faiths and allowed their devotees complete freedom in the practice of religious disciplines. India is a veritable Parliament of Religions. The bogey of Hinduism as a communal religion has no basis in fact. It is the most universal religion ever developed on earth. A good Hindu shows the same respect to other faiths as he does to his own. To be sure, one sees fanaticism here and there, as among the followers of any religion ; but this is not at all the Hindu spirit. Its main cause is ignorance and also, the instinct for self-preservation, developed by Hindu society during the period of ruthless foreign domination.

Swami Vivekananda asked the Hindus to familiarize themselves with the teachings of the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gítá*, which would remove the contemporary superstition and the narrow outlook of bigoted Hindus. If the study of Hinduism is excluded from the educational system, religion will only go underground and be controlled by the ignorant masses and uneducated priests. On the other hand, if Hinduism based upon the scriptures is taught in schools and colleges side by side with the sciences and the humanities, what is incompatible with the progress of the country in the modern world will be discarded. A comparative study of religion will remove many erroneous ideas about other faiths and make real contributions to the promoting of mutual respect. Making religion responsible for the fissiparous tendencies in India, after the attainment of independence,

and talking of secularism as the panacea for India's evils, create confusion in the minds of Indian youth and bewilder thoughtful people of the West. It should be understood by the modern leaders of India that India is not a land of many religions and cultures. The main stream of Indian culture was created by Hinduism, which, however, did not hesitate to broaden itself by assimilating healthy foreign ideas. Hinduism is not opposed to material prosperity or rational knowledge. When India was spiritually creative and virile, she was also materially prosperous and achieved remarkable success in the physical sciences, art, literature, sculpture, and philosophy.

India with her diverse communities can be integrated only on a spiritual foundation ; economic, political, or social devices will help in implementing this integration. The caustic critics of the Hindu caste system emphasize the evils of this grand social organization, whose real purpose was the promotion of harmony among people of different temperaments and aptitudes. It protected the weak from exploitation by the rich and the powerful. Through the caste system Hindu philosophers indicated the supremacy of spirituality and intellect over militarism, wealth, and organized labour. The caste system, by its rigid rules, preserved Hindu society from total disintegration during the period of foreign domination. It is a law of the relative world that power always corrupts, and the caste system was no exception. The remedy is not, however, in bringing down everybody, in the name of equality, to the level of the *sudras*. The Hindu ideal has been to raise all, by education and spiritual discipline, to the level of true *brahmins*. The present-day inequities of the caste system must be removed by appropriate laws, but modern India must not give up the ideal of the leadership of society by men of spirituality and intellect. Such leaders can be drawn from all levels of society. Swami Vivekananda, a few hours before his passing away, made the significant remark: "India is immortal if she persists in her search for God. But if she goes in for politics and social conflict, she will die."

As we have already stated, from the moment Swami Vivekananda touched Indian soil on his return from the West, he devoted himself to the task of the country's regeneration. He had studied America's economic

system, industrial organization, educational institutions, museums and art galleries, her progress in science, technology, hygiene, and social welfare work, and he called on his countrymen to adopt them in keeping with India's spiritual ideals. Having a premonition of his fast approaching death, he planted the ideas only in seminal form, leaving the details to others to work out. The two things uppermost in his mind were the masses and the women of India. He felt very sad when he contrasted their condition with what he had seen in America.

He was full of admiration for American women. In one letter he said in his usual enthusiastic way: "Nowhere in the world are women like those of this country. How pure, independent, self-reliant, and kind-hearted! It is the women who are the life and soul of this country. All learning and culture are centred in them." In another letter: "[Americans] look with veneration upon women, who play a most prominent part in their lives. Here this form of worship has attained its perfection—this is the long and short of it. I am almost at my wit's end to see the women of this country. They are *Lakshmi*, the goddess of fortune, in beauty, and *Saraswati*, the goddess of learning, in virtues—they are the Divine Mother incarnate. If I can raise a thousand such Madonnas—incarnations of the Divine Mother—in our country before I die, I shall die in peace. Then will our countrymen become worthy of their name." And in a third letter: "How many beautiful homes I have seen, how many mothers whose purity of character, whose unselfish love for their children, are beyond expression, how many daughters and pure maidens, 'pure as the icicle on Diana's temple'—and withal much culture, education, and spirituality in the highest sense! . . . There are good and bad everywhere, true—but a nation is not to be judged by its weaklings, called the wicked, for they are only the weeds which lag behind, but by the good, the noble, and the pure, who indicate the national life-current to be flowing clear and vigorous."

His heart bled at the sight and thought of the poverty of the Indian masses. "No religion on earth," he wrote angrily, "preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the lowly in such a fashion as Hinduism. Religion is not at fault, but it is the Pharisees and the

Sadducees." When one day in New York he saw a millionaire lady sitting in a tram-car side by side with a Negress with a wash-basket on her lap, he was impressed with the democratic spirit of the Americans. He wanted in India "an organization that will teach the Hindus mutual help and appreciation" after the pattern of Western democracies. He envisaged New India arising "out of the cottage of the peasant grasping the plough, out of the huts of the fishermen, the cobbler, and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and markets. Let her emerge from the groves and the forests, from hills and mountains." Swami Vivekananda had tremendous faith in the common people, who, through the oppression of hundreds of years, had developed great fortitude and vitality. If they had enough to eat, he thought, they would revolutionize the country. Though poverty generally destroys men's virtues, yet they had stored up wonderful strength that came out of a pure and moral life which was not to be found anywhere else in the world. All that the people of India needed was good education and worldly security to manifest again the refinement in taste, intellect, and human relationship which is the pride of Western society.

Swami Vivekananda constantly exhorted the leaders to feel for the poor, to regard them as God, to work for them and pray for them. He asked them to take the vow to devote their whole lives to the cause of the three hundred millions, going down and down every day. "So long," he wrote, "as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them." How well he knew that the national leaders often spent themselves in loud talk without accomplishing anything in action, and the national life stood still. The engine, the propeller, and the whistle in a steamship operate by steam. But if all of the steam is spent in blowing the whistle, the ship cannot move. Swami Vivekananda disliked the idea of pity for the poor. He asked the leaders to render service to them in a spirit of worship as taught by Sri Ramakrishna. It was he who coined the phrase *Daridra Narayana*, the Lord in the form of the poor.

The Swami wanted *sannyasins* to devote themselves to improving the

condition of the masses, instead of preaching religion to them all the time. He saw that thousands of men clothed in the garb of monks were floating like moss over the stagnant water of India's national life. How wonderful it would be if these world-renouncers went to the villages and taught them—side by side with religion—history, geography, hygiene, improved agriculture, and elementary sciences. He knew very well that religion does not take root in empty bellies. He made it a rule that the monks of the Ramakrishna Order, in addition to the traditional monastic vow of the liberation of the self, should take a second vow of dedicating themselves to the service of humanity.

America's opulence, achieved through hard work, moral discipline, and cooperative effort, impressed the Swami. In a moment of apparent despair, surveying the Indian situation, he wrote to an American devotee that he would like to infuse some of the American spirit into India, "that awful mass of conservative jelly-fish, and then throw overboard all old associations and start a new thing, entirely new—simple, strong, new and fresh as the first-born baby—throw all of the past overboard and begin anew."

India must learn new things from the West, but not by sacrificing her own national heritage. The Swami said: "You put the seed in the ground and give it plenty of earth and air and water to feed upon; when the seed grows into the plant, does it become the earth, does it become the air, or does it become the water? It becomes the mighty plant, the mighty tree, after its own nature, having absorbed everything that was given to it. Let that be your position." This is certainly salutary advice for the Indian scholars, educators, and leaders who visit Europe and America every year to learn the Western "know-how" needed to reconstruct Indian national life.

India has been receiving gifts of money, loans, and various aid from foreign countries, which usually regard India as one of the "under-developed" countries. Many of the Indian leaders, while asking for foreign help, speak of their country in the same way. Americans regard primitive people still living in the backwoods, the "hill-billies," as under-developed; Indians should be ashamed to be classified with them. Are tall buildings, auto-

mobiles, television, radio, rockets, and destructive bombs the only criteria of cultural development?

The habit of begging seems to have pervaded many aspects of our national life, in spite of the fact that India possesses enough material resources and brain power to improve her present condition. What we lack today is hard work, self-reliance, ethical principles, and genuine patriotism. If we seek foreign aid in the fields of science and technology after exhausting our own resources and initiative, we shall get it in an honourable way. Seldom is a gift offered without a string, political or economic. Sri Ramakrishna, before his passing away, asked Holy Mother never to go to anybody as a beggar. "If you stretch your hand," he warned, "you will also sell your head." Swami Vivekananda was aware of India's need of foreign help. But he had his own idea about it. He said: "By preaching the profound secrets of *Vedanta* in the Western world, we shall attract the sympathy and regard of these mighty nations, maintaining for ourselves the position of their teachers in spiritual matters; let them remain our teachers in all material concerns. Nothing will come of crying day and night before them, 'Give me this!' or 'Give me that!' When there grows a link of sympathy and regard between both nations by this give-and-take intercourse, there will be then no need for these noisy cries. They will do everything of their own accord. I believe that by this cultivation of religion and the wider diffusion of *Vedanta*, both our country and the West will gain enormously." If Indian students, scholars, and members of the diplomatic services present before the American and European public the true spirit of Hinduism—not just dancing and music—there will be created a tremendous fund of goodwill and respect for India. The Indians will no longer be stigmatized as "under-developed" people. It should be noted that Hinduism will be appreciated in America when India improves her material condition. Americans are practical people. They want to see how a religion functions in daily life. The Hindu *dharma* never supports poverty. Non-attachment is its ideal, and not poverty, except the voluntary poverty of genuine monks. The Upanishads say in many places that the fruit of knowledge is the enjoyment of children, grandchildren, wealth, cattle, and longevity here on earth, and happiness in heaven. Besides

poverty, another reason for America's critical attitude towards Hinduism is the activities of many pseudo-Swamis and Yogis. It is difficult for Americans to distinguish between the genuine and the spurious.

Swami Vivekananda firmly believed that *Vedanta* would help to resolve the conflict between religion and science, which is a major factor in the world tragedy and confusion of today. The scientists' criticism of religion is due to the fact that all their information about religion is derived from the study of Christianity and Judaism, and a distorted knowledge of the Oriental religions.

Modern science is the creation of the Western mind. The scientific era was inaugurated more than three hundred years ago by such eminent scientists as Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, when they began their investigation of the laws controlling natural events. This tradition has been carried on up to the present time by many brilliant scientists. The one great implication of their research is that natural phenomena are explained by natural laws without the aid of any supernatural factors. This gave a severe blow to many of the religious beliefs which dominated Western minds before that time. The goal of modern science is to understand the nature of the universe and derive power from that knowledge for the betterment of the human condition. Science has delved into the structure of atoms, as well as the vast space outside.

The theory of evolution propounded by Darwin, in the *Origin of Species*, published in 1859, is a great landmark in the scientific thinking of our age. Sailing in the *Beagle* in 1832, as the naturalist for a surveying expedition, he carried on his research in the Galapagos Islands. He examined fossils, bones, and living animals, and found a gradual evolution of species through natural selection, adaptation, struggle for existence, and other means, without intervention from any supernatural agency. This was a great shock to the Biblical doctrine of creation and the Aristotelian theory of fixed species. According to the evolution theory, as Sir Julian Huxley puts it, all aspects of reality are subject to evolution, from atoms and stars to fish and flowers, from fish and flowers to human societies and values—indeed, all reality is a single process of evolution. Man is the highest dominant type to be produced by over two and a half billion years of slow

biological improvement effected by the automatic and blindly opportunistic workings of natural selection without any conscious effort on man's part. Matter has evolved into life and life into mind, though no scientist has yet been able to create in the laboratory life from non-life. The evolution theory has profoundly influenced all aspects of Western thinking: religious, philosophical, social, economic, and political. Physical science gives a purely mechanistic and materialistic interpretation of man and the universe.

The prestige of science rests mainly on the scientific method and the development of technology. By the former, a thing is explained not by any extraneous factor, but by reference to itself. It repudiates the outside authority employed by religion. Certainly the scientific method has revolutionized man's thinking. The most tangible effect of technology, which has cast its spell upon man's mind, is seen in the healing of many diseases, heretofore considered incurable, the general improvement of health and longevity, the preservation of physical vitality even in old age, the promotion of education and inter-communication, and the creation of many creature comforts never dreamt of before.

A necessary corollary of the theory of evolution is the concept of gradual progress, barring a holocaust caused by nuclear, chemical, biological, or radiological warfare, or the overpopulation of the earth brought about by the eradication of many diseases and the improvement of nutrition. Scientists are making many speculations regarding the bright future of mankind: the establishment of a world community based upon agreement and trust (although the two most scientifically advanced countries of our time harbour ill-will, fear, and suspicion of each other); ample range of choice in men's work and leisure; reduction of routine toil for the provision of food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities of living; reasonable control over procreation; improvement of human species by establishing banks for germ cells, like modern blood banks; conquest of external nature, including a mastery over energy; advancement of automaton to replace unnecessary human labour; use of automatic calculators and related apparatus to relieve human thinking; colonization on the planets and on satellites of suns other than our own, and so on.

But some deep thinkers are realizing the limitations of science and the

evil effect of the unbridled growth of technology. Science is not omnipotent or omniscient. The mere advancement of technology cannot be the panacea for all human evils. It can be truthfully said that though science has greatly helped us to understand the physical aspect of man and the universe, it has left out their essential elements, namely, the soul and God, or Universal Intelligence. The conclusions of science are not incorrect, but they are inadequate. A road map is no doubt a valuable help to a motorist driving in an unknown region, giving him details of the roads, but it cannot say anything about the colour or flavour of the countryside. Science is concerned with a specialized study. A scientist sees only what he is trained to see. Though he can use a powerful searchlight to understand the object under his investigation, he does not know much of the area surrounding it. Thus for every area of light he discovers two areas of darkness. All forms of knowledge are inter-related ; therefore it can be questioned if the knowledge of even one specific object discovered by science is complete. Scientific knowledge is quantitative and not qualitative ; it is not concerned with values. Knowledge cannot initiate action, which is influenced by feeling and impulse. Science is descriptive and not explanatory. It merely states that water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit, but cannot explain why the mobile molecules become solid at that temperature. Science talks of energy but does not have the faintest idea of what energy is. It does not seem possible that the true meaning and nature of energy will ever be made known by the laboratory method. The primal cause, or the Absolute, is outside the realm of science, which deals only with the manifestation. When science speaks of a cause, such as that of a comet or of rain, it means that science either can forecast the appearance of a comet or control the rainfall. Certain deep values cherished by man, such as his aesthetic sensitivity, moral perfection, and self-transcendence in communion with the Infinite, are outside its jurisdiction.

Technology, in spite of its creating many physical comforts, will play a vital part in the mass destruction inevitable in a future global war. It is responsible for mass-production, mass-communication, and mass-conformity, which are the causes of much of the boredom felt by the modern man. It is also responsible for many broken homes, excessive drinking, and

juvenile delinquency. The modern man lives in a loveless world where he is not at peace with himself, with his fellow beings, with nature, or with his Creator. Mere knowledge without understanding and love can very well lead to a human catastrophe. The Western catchword "Man's right to knowledge and the free use thereof" is a dangerous slogan.

Science and technology bear a great responsibility for the increasing secularization of the Western mind. Though this knowledge is now chiefly confined to a relatively few intellectuals, it will spread, with the extension of general education, to the masses everywhere, in East and West alike. Science denies the authority of God and of the scriptures, which inspired moral laws in the West during pre-scientific days. The world created by modern science is morally and spiritually hollow. Consequently what satisfies a man's desires and impulses is considered good, and the contrary, evil. Many people in the West who would anyway discard the idea of God or a future life in order to give full expression to their physical impulses and desires, hail this view of morality as a veritable godsend. The most dangerous opponent of the traditional religions is the new religion and ethics which science is trying to create through organized scientific knowledge. Its main purpose will be the renaissance of the old Greek ideal, a sound mind in a sound body. Whereas the great religions of the world are based on the inner spiritual experiences of prophets, and their aim is the liberation of the spirit from bondage to matter.

Swami Vivekananda was fully aware of the implications of modern science and technology, both beneficial and harmful. Realizing their need in modern India, he wanted to turn the Belur Math into a finished university where Western sciences and Hindu mysticism would be studied side by side. He asked Indians to go to the West for scientific knowledge. He also pointed out that certain of the important scientific truths were known to the ancient Indian thinkers, though presented in a form which may appear crude to the modern mind. We shall briefly mention here some of the Hindu views on evolution, the idea of progress, man and his relation to the universe, creation, energy, God and the universe, and the scope of scriptural authority. Swami Vivekananda's replies to the Western views on these points have been given in detail in his works.

The theory of evolution was well known to Hindu philosophers. Patanjali speaks of the transformation of species. The Hindu theory has a significance different from its Western counterpart, which explains only the evolution of physical structures. It is concerned with the liberation of the spirit. The soul, which is essentially ever pure, ever free, and ever illumined, has, on account of an inscrutable ignorance called *máyá*, identified itself with matter ; this has concealed its true nature. But ever since the identification, the soul has been trying to destroy the veil of *máyá*. In order to assert its freedom it uses different sheaths (*koshas*), at different stages of evolution : the sheaths of matter (*annamaya*), of life (*pránamaya*), of mind (*manomaya*), of intellect (*vijñanamaya*), and of bliss (*ánandamaya*). These sheaths, gross and subtle, which are material in nature, are activated by the presence of the soul. Realizing that none of these sheaths can fully manifest the freedom of the soul, it detaches itself from them, one by one, and at last discovers its true nature. Through the process of evolution, the soul creates new bodies and again discards them for its ultimate liberation from all material bondages. The embodied soul, during the lower stages of evolution, may use the techniques of competition, adaptation, or natural selection. But during higher stages it uses different techniques, such as the control of the body and mind, discrimination, and dispassion. Evolution cannot be conceived of apart from involution. If matter evolves into life, the latter must be present in matter. If a man, in the course of evolution, attains perfection, that perfection is already present in him, though in a hidden form.

The Hindu view of progress is different from the Western view, which is the creation of modern science. Christianity speaks of perfection when Adam and Eve dwelt in the Garden of Eden. Science speaks of the millennium lying ahead. If by progress is meant the gradual elimination of evil and the enhancement of good so that in future good alone will remain, Hinduism disagrees with the whole concept. In the creation the sum total of good and evil, pain and pleasure, remains constant. They only shift from place to place, like a man's chronic rheumatism. Progress made in physical comfort is usually accompanied by a decline in moral and spiritual values. Evil or suffering is inherent in the creation, like the law

of gravitation. We live in a changing world, not necessarily in a progressive world. The cosmic process resembles waves in an ocean. A wave rises, reaches its crest, and then falls to rise again. Real progress is made by the individual in his attempt to gain spiritual freedom. Every age, in spite of the inevitable presence of good and evil, affords the struggling soul opportunities to attain perfection.

Hinduism gives a spiritual interpretation of man and the universe as opposed to the purely materialistic and mechanistic. The whole creation, containing animate creatures and inanimate nature, is the projection of the pure spirit, or *Brahman*. It is sustained by *Brahman* and ultimately merges in *Brahman*. Physical objects are different forms of *Shakti*, or the energy of *Brahman*. *Brahman* and *Shakti* are inseparable. What science calls energy is probably an aspect of *Brahman's Shakti*. While projecting the universe, *Brahman* uses this energy, and after the creation of physical forms It enters into them as life and consciousness. Without the presence of spirit or intelligence, matter cannot act. Even the evolutionist's process of natural selection or adaptation indicates the presence of intelligence, instinctive or conscious. Why or how the non-dual spirit appears as the universe of diversity, or the perfect God creates an imperfect world, will always remain a mystery to the finite human mind. The admission of this fact is not, however, an admission of the defeat of intellect ; it only indicates that there is a higher state of understanding, beyond discursive reasoning, which alone can solve the enigma. This understanding exists in all men and can be developed by appropriate spiritual disciplines. The creation is designated by Vedantists as *máyá*. *Máyá* is not an explanation of the visible universe ; it is really a statement of fact—of what we are and what the universe is. A scientist can see a table as a solid object or as a mass of electrical energy. But how or why the energy appears as a solid substance, science cannot explain.

Hinduism is a combination of religion and philosophy, which are not incompatible. The Hindu religion is monotheistic ; it asserts only one God, the different deities of Hinduism representing His diverse aspects. Hindu philosophy, especially *Vedanta*, is non-dualistic, asserting the oneness of God, the soul, and the universe. *Brahman* has been described as both active

and non-active. From the phenomenal standpoint *Brahman*, as *Shakti*, is the active cause of projection, preservation, and destruction. When the creation disappears in the deepest contemplation there exists only the pure spirit. Hindu philosophers discovered the pure spirit not by analysis of the physical universe, which may indicate it, nor through the grace of the deities, who appeared later in creation. They realized it in meditation through the mind purified by the practice of spiritual disciplines. *Brahman* is the inmost essence of the universe and of individual souls.

Vedanta does not accept the idea of a God outside the universe, like the one the Bible speaks of, nor does it create a Cartesian division between matter and mind. According to it, reality includes matter, mind, and spirit. Swami Vivekananda compared reality to a pyramid whose thick base is seen as matter. As one climbs upward one encounters the realm of ideas or mind. At the apex is the pure spirit, which actually pervades the entire pyramid. Reality seen through the senses is matter, apprehended by the mind is idea, and experienced through inner consciousness is pure spirit. *Vedanta* does not explain an object or an event by referring to anything outside it. The explanation comes from within the thing itself. The law of *karma* or action, for instance, explains a man's happiness or suffering. The action has been performed by the man himself.

Hinduism accepts the empirical reality of the universe. It exists as long as one perceives it under the spell of cosmic ignorance. It is not non-existent like the son of a barren woman. Admitting the reality of the universe. Hinduism has formulated its doctrines of cosmology, ethics, sociology, and theology. The purpose of its cosmology is not to establish the ultimate reality of the universe, but to show its impermanent nature, and thus spur man on in the search for the permanent substance or *Brahman*. There are tests of the knowledge of *Brahman*. *Brahman* is one and without a second ; therefore the knowledge of *Brahman* eliminates all quarrels and controversies. Only the lesser knowledge shows disagreement, not the highest, in which all apparent contradictions are harmonized and by means of which one knows everything. Another test of knowledge is that the knower devotes himself to the welfare of all because he finds himself in all and all in himself.

Though the Upanishads designate the knowledge of the universe as the lower knowledge (*aparā vidyā*) and extol the knowledge of *Brahman* as the higher knowledge (*parā vidyā*), yet they ask spiritual seekers to pursue both. By the lower knowledge one overcomes death, that is to say, the many evils of life ; by the higher knowledge one attains to immortality, that is to say, realizes the deathless nature of the soul. The *Katha Upanishad* says that "all the knots of the heart are cut asunder and all doubts resolved" when one knows both the Supreme Spirit and its manifestation as the phenomenal universe.

Western scientists have rightly criticized the Christian church for often thwarting their efforts toward the discovery of new knowledge. The Hindu scriptures never put up such a barrier. In India a philosopher was not persecuted for his beliefs. Even the views of the Buddhists, the Jainas, and the Charvakas, who denied the authority of the Vedas, were given the status of philosophy. The Hindu scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Upanishads, are valid in such supersensuous concepts as God, the soul, or the hereafter. Even about them the scriptures must agree with reason and experience. They show the way to the realization of the spirit, but cannot take an aspirant there. The function of the scriptures, as Sankaracharya has said, is to describe the results of thought and action. They cannot compel people to pursue the good and avoid the evil. Man is the architect of his own life. The ultimate validity of morality does not lie with the words of the scriptures. For non-dualists it is derived from realization of the unity of existence. Compassion, love, and unselfishness become spontaneous with him who sees all in himself and himself in all. He gives assurance of fearlessness to all creatures. He cannot bear the slightest trace of ill-will or fear toward any. For the dualist the source of morality is the realization that all creatures are children or parts of God. He sees God in everything and everything in God, and looks on the pleasure and pain of all beings as he looks on them in himself.

It may be asked why the Hindus, who are generally known for their keen intellect and who had gained remarkable knowledge in many branches of physical science in a much earlier age, lagged behind the West in the creation of modern science. Modern Europe inherited from medieval

Christianity two priceless assets : precision of thought and respect for nature. The early Christian thinkers, for instance, figured out to their satisfaction the exact time of creation and also the number of angels that could stand "on the point of a needle." The ideas are thoroughly ludicrous, but they show an attempt at precise thinking. They also developed natural theology, which demonstrates the revelation of God in nature, as dogmatic theology and mystical theology speak of divine revelation through scriptural dogma and mystical experience respectively. The Hindu mind, as one finds in the Puranas, is characterized by a certain vagueness. Even in modern India one is appalled to see the lack of precision. During the post-Sankara period Hindu philosophers repudiated the world as the product of a sinister *máyá*. The natural sciences cannot develop unless one shows respect to the world. Sri Ramakrishna, however, gave the world a spiritual status.

Swami Vivekananda knew well that India, the heart of the Orient, with all her lofty spiritual realizations, had not solved her national problems ; nor had America, the leader of the progressive West, solved her problems in spite of great achievements in science and technology. Every problem is being realized today as a part of the world problem ; no problem can be solved piecemeal. Therefore East and West should sit together in a spirit of humility and pool their efforts to solve the world problem, always bearing in mind the Vedantic ideal of the solidarity of man and the unity of existence. The fact that the world is one was realized long ago by Hindu philosophers and is now being hinted at by modern science. Science and religion must work in harmony to bring out the spiritual potentialities of man.

According to Julian Huxley, evolution has gone from the biological stage to the psycho-social stage. Sri Aurobindo says that, in the next stage of evolution intuition, which sees things as a whole, will replace discursive reasoning, which sees things piecemeal, just as the latter has taken the place of instinct. In the opinion of the Jesuit scientist Teilhard de Chardin, man is not individually alone in his thinking. He exists and has his being in the intangible sea of thought which de Chardin names *noösphere*, in the same sort of way that fish exist and have their being in the material sea of water, called by geographers the *hydrosphere*. We see many ideas floating

in the noösphere: the mystical experiences of past seers, the daring advice of religious prophets, the organized knowledge of science, the mature imaginings of the world's poets and artists. All these scattered ideas must be brought together in a Parliament of Man, as dreamt of by Swami Vivekananda, for the final triumph of the human spirit over the dark forces of matter. Thus will be corrected the imbalance in the present human situation which exists in both East and West.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN WORLD PERSPECTIVE

"A mere pin or a needle," Ramakrishna had told his great disciple, "was enough to kill oneself, but to kill others swords and lances were needed". In other words, while the path of austerity and meditation was the right one to be followed by an aspirant for personal salvation, for Narendranath, destined as he was to play the role of teacher and servant of humanity, spiritual elevation was not sufficient, and scholarship was essential. Encouraged by his *guru*, Narendranath threw himself heart and soul into his studies, covering every branch of learning, spiritual and lay, and oriental as well as occidental. It was not mere book-learning that he thus acquired; he learned directly from men and things, as, soon after the demise of the Master, he left his *gurubhais*, now gathered in a dilapidated building, which they called the Baranagore Math, and walked alone 'like the rhinoceros' (as Buddha had urged his followers), through the length and breadth of India. With little to distinguish him outwardly from the millions of *sadhus* who roved about in the country—dressed in loin-cloth and with the staff and *kamandalu* in hand—he passed through the chief cities of Northern India, Rajputana, Bombay Presidency, and the Deccan, making only brief halts here and there, till he reached Kanyakumari, which is situated on the southern-most tip of the Indian Peninsula. There, he flung himself into the waters of the Indian Ocean, and, swimming across to a little rock a short distance away (since then called Swamiji's Rock), spent a night in meditation.

While, during these years of ceaseless wanderings, his spirit soared often to supernal heights, his heart expanded, keeping him pinned to the earth, and he felt the intensest pangs of love for the down-trodden, poverty-stricken masses of his country—love such as he later described in his lectures on *Bhakti Yoga* as the one motive-force of the universe, and under the impetus of which Christ gave his life for humanity, Buddha even for an animal, the mother for the child, the husband for the wife, and men are ready to give up their lives for their country—eternal love.¹ And, while he was seated on that rock, his pilgrimage finished, the thought flashed across his mind: to think of preaching religion among the masses of his

country, who were hungry and living the life of brutes on account of their ignorance was sheer madness ; did not Ramakrishna say, "An empty stomach is no good for religion?" It filled him with the resolve to find out the way for the regeneration of the masses of his beloved motherland ; to do or to die in the attempt.

At the time Swami Vivekananda was crying out in the deepest pain of his heart for help in finding out the remedy for India's miseries, a hand stretched out to him from across the seas. The air was thick with talks about a Parliament of Religions which was going shortly to be held in Chicago in America, and he began to confide to sympathetic souls about his intention to proceed there. He was convinced, as he told two of his *gurubhais*, Brahmananda and Turiyananda, when they happened to meet each other at Abu Road Station, that the Parliament of Religions was willed by God to prepare his success. He received from many quarters offers of financial help for his mission, but he hesitated for long to accept them, preferring to await a command from above. Some young men of Madras, who had chanced to meet him when he first came to the city in the course of his wanderings, wanted to send him to Chicago as the delegate of the Hindu faith, and raised the necessary funds by begging from door to door for subscriptions. He agreed, but he warned them that he might not after all attend the Parliament, and they left him 'free' in the matter.^{1a}

His own idea about the mission to America was evidently not quite the same as that of those who proposed to send him there for the simple reason, if not for many others, that he conceived of Hinduism as the Universal Religion, and it was forbidden him, as a disciple of Ramakrishna, to decry other religions and at their expense exalt his own. Each and every delegate at the great assembly might consider it to be his proper function to interpret the essentials of his particular faith, to defend it against criticisms, to boost it, and even expect to be able to proclaim it to be the only true religion on earth. Even the organizers of the Parliament of Religions had, behind their outward show of philanthropy, other ideas ; they expected it would be a 'heathen show', and end in the triumphant recognition of Christianity as the best religion of the world. Swami Vivekananda's hesitation to associate himself with such a body was natural enough, and,

we know, if it had not been for his having met that 'providential woman', Miss Sanborn, through whom he met Prof. Wright, who removed the difficulties in the way of his attending the Parliament—not the least of which was his own reluctance to do so—he might have dropped the idea altogether!

It was quite correct, as Swami Vivekananda declared from many a platform after he returned to India, that he did not go to America, or even care at all, for the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, which was only an opening, an opportunity, a first step, or even something by the way.² As he told a representative of *India*, a London magazine, during his visit to England in 1896, he had no special preference for America either, and went there for an accidental reason merely, namely that the Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago rather than in London, as, in his opinion, it ought to have been.³ This was even though America had long interested him, and he knew something about the country. His brother, Mahendranath Datta, tells us that he had once met one Amritlal Roy, who had lived in America for some time, and written a book, *Reminiscences of America*, a copy of which he had presented to him.⁴ On the other hand, it is possible he cherished the hope of some day being able to go to England and preach *Vedanta* to the English people, as we infer from the following story narrated in Mahendranath's book just mentioned. While Swami Vivekananda was at Ghazipur, where the great saint, Pavhari Baba, lived, he was introduced by his friend, Srishchandra Vasu, the Munsif of the place, to the District Judge, who was a Britisher. The latter was struck by the personality of the young Swami, and often invited him to his bungalow for talks. He and his wife had many discussions with him on Indian philosophy—incidentally, being the first Europeans to listen to his discourses on the subject. The old couple became so enamoured of him that they advised him to proceed to England for higher studies, offering to bear all his expenses themselves. Then again when he was staying at Porbandar, the Dewan of that State, a noted Sanskrit scholar himself, was struck with the originality of mind he displayed as he was helping him in his Vedic translations, and urged him to go to the West, and actually induced him to learn French in preparation for his work there.

If then Swami Vivekananda did not particularly care for attending the Parliament of Religions and if America was not a deliberate choice, why did he go to America? The answers to this question have a wide range—varying from God's will to the dialectics of historical materialism. The common belief, however, is that he had realised that money—to the tune of 300 million rupees—was required to bring about the economic rehabilitation of the Indian masses, and that he went to America to earn this amount 'by the power of his brain'. An obvious objection to this argument is that it was only after he had stayed in America for some time that he found that there was this opening for him there. He, like others, knew that money goes a long way, and, if one of his objects was to earn money for India, as he himself hinted at sometimes, "these aspects of his life, speeches and writings should not be over-emphasized," as Swami Gambhirananda suggests.⁵ He knew well, as he wrote in a letter to Alasinga, that 'money is not power, but goodness, holiness'. "All the wealth of the world", he told Swami Shuddhananda in a letter dated July, 1897, "cannot help one little village in India if the people are not taught to help themselves".

His earnings in America, it seems, have been over-estimated. Actually, they just sufficed to cover his personal expenses, everything being frightfully costly in America in comparison with India and even with England. He did save a bit to be able to make a few remittances home, but, after he had stayed in America for over a year, on Sept. 21, 1894, he wrote to Alasinga, "There is no scope for money for our project here". It must be remembered in this connection that the classes he held in New York and elsewhere were, in accordance with ancient Indian custom, absolutely free, that some of his most paying lectures were delivered to provide for local charity-worthy objects, that he personally also spent liberally in charity, while his earnings were mulcted by a Lecture Bureau, and he was shamelessly robbed by all concerned,—hotel-keepers and the like. It has been an accusation against him that he had a habit of staying in costly hotels, but this was only because he was refused admittance into the cheaper ones, as for instance at Baltimore, where Rev. Vrooman, who had invited him to come to that place, first conducted him to one third-class hotel after another, whose owners,

actuated by race prejudice, refused to accept him, and then took him to the most fashionable hotel in the city, where a room could be secured for him. It may be mentioned here that, though in some of his speeches, viz., the one delivered in Victoria Hall, Madras, after his return to India, and another delivered at Pasadena, California, during his second American visit, he says that he went to America because India failed him, he does not say that he went to America to raise the money which he failed to collect in India.

On the other hand, Swami Vivekananda had a lofty conception of his mission to the West and of its significance both in his personal and his country's history. Looking back at it, well nigh at the end of his life's journey, he told Nivedita, in a letter from San Francisco, dated March 28, 1900, that the seed must die underground to come up as a tree, and that the underground rotting 'meant a tremendous upheaval of the whole life'. One such, he went on to say, brought him to Ramakrishna, another sent him to the U.S.A., and the third (and last), 'the greatest of all', was his work in India in the two preceding years, 1897-99. In his view, it thus seems, the American mission was the central event of his whole career.

In a speech delivered at Victoria Hall, Madras, referred to above, Swami Vivekananda frankly told his listeners, among whom there must have been present the young men, who had sent him to America, that his going to America was neither his nor their doing. "But", said he, "the God of India who is guiding her destiny sent me".⁶ He spoke in the same vein on another occasion, viz., at the Triplicane Literary Society, Madras, as follows:—"I went to America and Europe, to which you so kindly allude; I had to, because that is the first sign of the revival of national life, expansion. The reviving national life, expanding inside, threw me off, and thousands will be thrown off in that way".⁷ "We find again India reviving, and ready to give her own quota to the progress and civilization of the world. And that I have been forced, as it were by nature, to go over and preach to America, is the result. Every one of us ought to have seen that the time had arrived".⁸ This very idea has been put by his brother, Dr. Bhupendra-nath Datta, patriot, revolutionary, and writer, who died recently, in

Marxian language, as follows:—"The dialectics of materialistic history of India impelled him to go abroad".⁹

In his Triplicane speech, referred to above, Swami Vivekananda went farther than in any other address to explain the significance of his work in America, which, he said, was working for India as well, or rather was a better way of serving India than by confining his activities to India. He said that one works best when the work is not prompted by self-interest and is done for others rather than for one's country, or kith and kin. Such work is truly spiritual work, and, in the words of Emperor Asoka, was 'true conquest'. He referred to India's ancient glorious civilization and her tradition of 'conquest of religion and spirituality', and declared, "Once more the whole world must be conquered by India". He said it was most urgent work that had to be done, because the Western world was on the brink of a precipice, and might go to pieces tomorrow; it was on a volcano which might burst tomorrow. He said that the revival of national life in India required that Indian thought must conquer the world, and that "we must do it or die in the very interests of our national life, our awakened vigorous national life".¹⁰

These were not the sentiments of a dreamer or of a mere idealist; they represented the sincere convictions of one who had made a thorough study of life both in his own country and in the West—by years of large-scale and grass-roots contact with the people, as also by delving into the realm of the spirit. They welled out of a heart free from vanity and thoughts of self and full of sympathy and love for mankind. During his three years of stay in America, as Swami Abhedananda has said, he had to fight against many obstacles; sometimes he would have summer clothes in winter and he would go through unimaginable hardships regarding food and clothes, facing the sudden changes and severities of the American climate; sometimes he would deny himself to help others; while at other times he would depend entirely upon the sympathy and voluntary help of his hosts and hostesses. Swami Abhedananda has said further that he had met many people in America who regarded Swami Vivekananda's masterpiece, *Raja Yoga*, in the same light as the most devout Christian regarded his own scriptures.¹¹ Marie Louise Burke has observed:

"Yes, truly, Swamiji was in the fullest sense a prophet sent by God to America".¹²

Romain Rolland has dwelt at length on the ferment caused in America by the transfusion of the doctrines of the *Vedanta* into the materialistic mind of the West, particularly America. One of the earliest Americans to introduce Indian thought into America, says he, was Emerson, who was for a number of years a neighbour of Thoreau, an ardent 'Asiatist', whose great work, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, is an enthusiastic eulogy of the *Gita*, and of other great Indian poems and philosophies. Thoreau, we know, was opposed to America's imperialist venture in Mexico, and his refusal to pay his poll tax so long as it went to the support of the Mexican war, led to his civil resistance and arrest by the Government, the experience of which was reflected in his essay, *Civil Disobedience*, published in 1849. This tract was translated into Hindi by M. K. Gandhi, when he was a student at Cambridge, and later inspired him to practise civil disobedience on a larger scale and on more momentous issues than Thoreau thought of.¹³ Thoreau was intimate with Whitman, whose *Leaves of Grass* was described by Emerson as 'a mixture of the *Bhagavad Gita* and *The New York Herald*'. Whitman had died just about a year before Swami Vivekananda reached America, and though it seems he read the *Leaves of Grass* for the first time only after his return to India (at Lahore at the house of Prof. Tirtha Ram Goswami, later known as Swami Ram Tirath), it is not possible that he knew nothing about Whitman while he was in America, judging from the fact that he was on intimate terms with the famous agnostic philosopher, Robert Ingersoll, who was present at the funeral of the poet; and he called Whitman 'the Sannyasin of America'. The influence of Indian thought is clearly discernible in the work of another American poet, Edgar Allen Poe, whose *Eureka*, published in 1848, bears the stamp of Upanishadic ideas.

Analogies to Indian thought are traceable also in certain doctrines which were in vogue in America at this time, e.g., Mind Cure, which produced the New Thought, Christian Science, etc.—which were strange kinds of bread, says Romain Rolland, kneaded out of the grain, of which the seeds had been sown by Emerson and Thoreau. Besides, there was Theosophy, whose

connection with Indian thought was very close. During his stay in America, Swami Vivekananda saw a good deal of the Christian Science people, and the girls of the Hale family, with whom he occasionally stayed at Chicago, were believers in Christian Science. In a letter to his *gurubhais* written from New York, dated September 25, 1894, Swami Vivekananda speaks about the Christian Science people as follows:—"They are Vedantins ; I mean they have picked up a few doctrines of the Advaita and grafted them upon the Bible. And they cure diseases by proclaiming "Soham, Soham"—"I am He! I am He!"—through strength of mind" . . . "The Christian Science is exactly like our *Kartabhaja* sect: Say, "I have no disease, and you are whole ; and say, "I am He"—"Soham"—and you are quits—be at large. This is a thoroughly materialistic country. The people of this Christian land will only recognize religion if you can cure diseases, work miracles, and open up avenues to money ; and they understand little else. But there are honourable exceptions". In a letter to Isabelle McKindley (dated 25th February, 1895), he makes fun at her expense for writing to him that she was unwell, for Christian Scientists did not confess to sickness. A long letter written by him to the Hale Sisters, dated 31st July, 1894, contains humorous descriptions of a session which the Christian Scientists were holding at Greenacre, which he had joined and greatly enjoyed.

Romain Rolland thinks that on account of such spread of the influence of Indian thought, the mind of America was prepared for receiving Swami Vivekananda. But he himself says that Whitman, whom he specially credits for preparing the ground for Swami Vivekananda, was little read except by small groups of chosen artists and exceptional men, and that too not so much in America as in England. Emerson and Thoreau had similarly had their day, and were no longer in vogue when Swami Vivekananda arrived in America. No doubt, Christian Science was prospering when he was there, but, as we know from his letter above quoted, it was not genuine spiritual coin and its material dross well nigh spoilt it as a spiritual force. The great French savant is on surer ground when he speaks of 'the synchronism of the human mind' and of 'cosmic laws' which control the evolution of humanity as a whole and to which the particular evolutions of different lands are subordinate. Without necessarily believing in what he calls

'cosmic laws', students of history are not unaware of certain synchronisms, e.g., movements of religious reform in Europe as well as in India in the sixteenth century, with no discoverable links between them.

Undoubtedly, towards the end of the nineteenth century, when Swami Vivekananda began his western mission, the destinies of many nations, widely separated from one another, had converged and begun to run along a common highway. Modern materialism, the product of western science, dominated the thoughts of Europe and America, had already invaded India and other lands in Asia, which were under western imperialism, and was about to engulf the whole world. Inasmuch as Swami Vivekananda's mission was undertaken, as we have seen above, to oppose Indian spirituality to western materialism—"to spiritualize the material civilization of the west", as he pin-pointed it in the first public lecture he delivered in the East after the end of the mission¹⁴—it was an attack on a world issue at its very heart and centre. If his western mission formed, as we have seen, the central event in his own career, it was also so in the history of India, and in that of the western nations as well. Western materialism had reached the meridian at the close of the nineteenth century; it was about to consolidate itself in the citadel of its might when a challenge came from an unexpected quarter, from a land which was under foreign rule, and was about to surrender its very soul to foreign ideals. It did not come with the blast of trumpet, or with the support of cohorts (India had none of them at the time); the bearer of it was a young *sannyasin*, though Romain Rolland says that he was 'a born king' and that 'within him was a Napoleon', his face lit up with radiant smile, his voice like music, and within his heart love for the whole of mankind.

At the close of the nineteenth century America stood at one of the momentous cross-roads of her own and world history. She was no longer what she was when thirteen colonies, after a successful but for long a precarious fight against the mother country, attained their independence. She now extended from ocean to ocean, and virtually the entire country between them had been carved out into states and territories. By 1890, the 'frontier' had disappeared. There was a phenomenal growth of her industries, particularly iron and steel, the basic industry of the nation and 'the

principal under-pinning of the American economy'. The life of Andrew Carnegie, who had come from Scotland as a boy of twelve to serve as a bobbin boy and rose to be America's 'steel king', reflected the spirit of the age. Simultaneously, agriculture, which throughout the country remained the country's largest industry, and at which the bulk of the people worked, was revolutionized by the application of science and machinery to the processes of farming. The American farmer grew enough grain and cotton and enough livestock not only to meet American needs but to export ever-increasing surpluses. In the nearly three decades that had passed between the Civil War and Swami Vivekananda's coming to the Parliament of Religions, the population of America had more than doubled, most of it in the cities, poverty had been virtually banished, and the standard of living raised to undreamt-of heights.

The tremendous development of industry, however, was accompanied by evils which had reached colossal proportions at the time Swami Vivekananda came to America. American industry had tended to pass into the control of 'trusts' and 'corporations', which in many respects were, indeed, logical forms of organization for large-scale undertakings. They facilitated centralized control and administration and the pooling of patents; gave industrial concerns unlimited power for expansion, for competing with foreign business companies and for exacting favourable terms for railroads. They also raised a race of industrial magnates, who could drive hard bargains with labour and enter and vitiate politics—notably and scandalously in securing the adoption by the government of a protectionist policy. In the presidential election of 1890, fought on the tariff issue, Benjamin Harrison, defending the concept of protection, won. The result was the passing of the McKinley tariff bill in 1890, which sought to protect not only established industries but to foster infant industries and, by prohibitory duties, to create new ones. The result was the vast increase of retail prices, and the cost of living, which caused wide-spread discontent and labour unrest.

At the same time agriculture, after a phenomenal expansion that had promised to make America 'the garden of the world', was for a number of reasons, operating all together in the 1890's, e.g., soil erosion, the vagaries of

nature, over-production of staple crops, insect pests, etc., rapidly declining. Agricultural and industrial interests clashed with each other on the problem of prices: the farmer sold his products in a competitive world market but purchased his supplies, equipment and household goods in a market protected against competition. The result was the formation of the so-called Farmers' Alliances, which were ere long metamorphosed into a new political party known as the Populists. The latter drew up a programme of extensive reforms, among which a prominent place was given to the demand for free coinage of silver, which stemmed from the belief that the miseries of the farmers were caused by shortage of money in circulation. Enlarging the volume of money in use, they believed, would indirectly result in higher prices for farm crops and better industries. In the elections of 1890, the Populists seized power in a dozen southern and western States and sent a score of Senators and Representatives to the Congress. In the presidential elections of the year, however, their candidate, who secured more than a million votes, was defeated and the Democratic candidate, Grover Cleveland, was elected. The money question, nevertheless, continued for years to be the chief issue before the parties and the people at large.

The year of the Chicago Parliament, 1893, found America in the grip of a severe financial panic. In the very first letter that Swami Vivekananda wrote to India after reaching America, he referred to this panic, which he said was created by the raising of the Rupee in India. He wrote that lots of mills had to close down.¹⁵ He was considerably hampered by this, he said. The crisis began with the failure of the Reading Railway and the collapse of the National Cordage Company in the spring of 1893. The New York banks suspended specie payments partially in August; many banks failed; 23000 miles of railways passed under receiverships; construction almost ceased. The panic in many ways proved to be a turning point in American history; it produced an industrial chaos, out of which big business emerged with greater strength, which, of course, meant "the rich getting richer and the poor poorer", and social disharmony.

Chicago, the second city of the United States in population, manufactures and commerce, and the greatest railway centre, was, in the year of the World's Columbian Exposition and the Parliament of Religions, which

were held there, in a state of commotion, traceable to the McCormick strike of 1886, followed by the rally of the anarchists, police firing, arrests and agitation over the savage sentences passed on the leaders. On the eve of the opening of the Parliament of Religions, the situation had considerably eased on account of the grant of pardon to three of the condemned leaders still rotting in prison. The truce between the Government and labour, however, was soon broken, when in the following year a great strike began in the works of the Pullman Car Company and assumed tremendous proportions when the cause of the Chicago workers was taken up by the American Railway Union. There was much rioting and destruction of property and the railway service was completely disorganized. As the State Governor refused to call up the militia, President Cleveland despatched Federal troops into the city against his protests. The strike immediately collapsed, but social harmony was hardly restored.

Such were the social and economic conditions in America when Swami Vivekananda arrived in the land with the message of the *Vedanta*. Using a famous Upanishadic imagery, we may liken the Americans to the bird of brilliant plumage, depicted therein as seated on a lower branch of the tree of life and eating its sweet and bitter fruits, and him to the one sitting on the same tree, "eating neither sweet nor bitter fruits, but immersed in his own glory, self-content, self satisfied".¹⁶ We may be sure that among the thousands who cheered him in the meetings of the Parliament of Religions right from the moment when he hailed them as 'Brothers and Sisters of America', there were many who had tasted the bitter fruits of the materialistic civilization of the West, and whose hearts had opened to the message of the East that Swami Vivekananda delivered to them. We have an authentic record of the effects his words produced on his audiences from the pen of Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, one of the foremost poetesses of America, who, with her future husband, listened to some of the lectures of Swami Vivekananda in New York.

The story is narrated by Mrs. Wilcox herself with quiet simplicity, and is best given in her own words, as follows: "We went out of curiosity (the Man whose name I bear and I), and before we had been ten minutes in the audience, we felt ourselves lifted up into an atmosphere so rarefied,

so vital, so wonderful, that we sat spell-bound and almost breathless, to the end of the lecture. . . . When it was over we went out with new courage, new hope, new strength, new faith, to meet life's daily vicissitudes. . . . It was that terrible year of financial distress, when banks failed and stocks went down like broken balloons and businessmen walked through the valleys of despair and the whole world seemed topsyturvy Sometimes after sleepless nights of worry and anxiety, the Man would go with me to hear the Swami lecture, and then he would come out into the winter gloom and walk down the street smiling and say, "It's all right. There is nothing to worry over."¹⁷ From other evidences, we learn that Swami Vivekananda identified himself with the masses as distinguished from the classes in America and championed popular causes, such as the silver standard. In a letter to Mary Hale, written from London on November 1, 1896, he refers to Mr. William J. Bryan, in whom the Populists had found a leader of magnetic personality, and who was their candidate for the presidential elections of 1896 but was defeated. With regard to the agitation about the Silver Standard, Swami Vivekananda wrote in the same letter as follows:—"I do not know all the difficulties about the gold, or the silver standard (nobody seems to know much as to that), but this much I see that the gold standard has been making the poor poorer and the rich richer. Bryan was right when he said, 'We refuse to be crucified on a cross of gold'. The silver standard will give the poor a better chance in this unequal fight. I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread".¹⁸

The situation at home had its effect on American foreign policy, which, also for many other reasons, world-wide in their sweep, had reached a critical stage. Isolationism in foreign policy was long under severe strain as agricultural distress dispelled the 'myth of the garden' and big business demanded wider markets overseas. Various interests, putting on diverse garbs, loudly advocated American participation in world politics in consonance with Manifest Destiny—the moral necessity for the land of liberty lending its support to nations struggling for freedom, America's right to secure a place in the counsels of the world consistent with her World Power status and commensurate with the needs of her commerce

and industries. Above all, America's own security, threatened, though not as yet directly by the rise of Germany, but by the change which it had occasioned in the balance of power in Europe, demanded American participation in international affairs. Again, it was argued that, if Great Britain controlled the Atlantic Ocean, America must control the Pacific, so that she might reach out to the shores beyond and capture the markets of China and Japan.

American advocates of imperialist policies found further justification for their expansionist programme in scientific and political theories emanating from the brains of German and British thinkers. Hegel's theory of the omnipotent State and his interpretation of world history as the emergence in time of God's will and its realization in successive cultures, with successive peoples dominating in successive phases, the Teutonic phase being the greatest and the last, had evoked also in America a strong feeling of Anglo-Saxon race superiority. At the same time the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin and the notion of the survival of the fittest added to it by Herbert Spencer, which were popularized in America by such writers as John Fiske and John W. Burgess, provided American imperialists with a scientific or pseudo-scientific *raison d'être* for their policies. The advocacy of these views of race-superiority coincided with an intensification of colour prejudice, which was always strong in the country, specially in the Southern States, and had of late been directed against Chinese labour, which was cheaper than local labour. It led to the passing by Congress in 1882, at the behest of California, which had a large population of yellow immigrants, and in flagrant violation of existing treaties with China, of the Chinese Exclusion Act, and, throughout the country, of the so-called 'Jim Crow' laws. Beginning in 1893, the year of the Chicago Parliament, a series of anti-Japanese laws were passed in the Pacific Coast States. As if to atone for these sins, at the opening session of the Parliament, the audience cheered the Chinese representative, Pung Kwang Yu, more vociferously than they did any other speaker, when he first appeared before them. President Bonney had said in his introductory remarks, "We have not treated China very well in this country."

Swami Vivekananda's references to America and the Americans in his

letters to India and his speeches in America during his first visit indicate quite clearly his thorough knowledge of them and his grasp of their manifold problems. It has been said that in the beginning he was so impressed with the vigour and energy manifested in Western civilization that he failed to notice the hidden canker that befouled it. This is not quite correct, and, even before he left India, he had some knowledge of the ugly aspects of western civilization, which were fully exhibited in British rule in India. Naturally enough, in the beginning of his stay in America he was most impressed by those qualities in the American people which his countrymen did not have an abundance of, and he wrote about them most frequently. The first thing that struck him was the energy and vitality of the Americans and the difference in the scale of everything American in comparison with everything corresponding to it in his own country. "Here you have a most wonderful manifestation of grit and power—what strength, what practicality and what manhood", wrote he to his *gurubhais* after he had been in the country for about a year . . . "Horses as huge as elephants are drawing carriages that are as big as houses. You may take that as a specimen of the gigantic proportions in other things also".¹⁹

Perhaps what pleased him most to see in America was the prevalence of the spirit of equality in everything concerning social and political life. It was not merely the spectacle of a working woman and a millionaire elbowing each other in the same tramway, in sharp contrast as this was with his experiences of caste tyranny in South India, that filled him with wonder. "In this land of America", he told a Boston audience after he had stayed in the land for about three years, "no question is asked about a man's peculiarities. If a man is a man, that is enough, and they take him into their hearts, and that is one thing I have never seen in any other country in the world".²⁰ What impressed him far more than such evidences of social equality was the equality of opportunities that American laws provided to refugees who came to the country from many countries of Europe, at the time suffering from governmental tyranny. He described his personal experiences as to how these refugees coming to America—crushed, down-trodden, hopeless,—got rehabilitated within just a few months of their stay in America, and were able to look everybody in the face. Swami Viveka-

nanda thought that the Americans were better than his own countrymen as 'practical Vedantists'.²¹

He was by no means unaware that the American medal had its other side. They were 'of Virochana's race', he said. 'To them ministering to the body is a great thing. . . A thousand instruments for paring nails, ten thousand for hair-cutting, and who can count the varieties of dress and toilet and perfumery?. . . All is right with them, but that enjoyment is their God'.²² "They are a race of Mammon-worshippers. Money comes before everything. . . It is almost a religion here".²³ "What do I find in Europe and America? The worship of Shakti, the worship of Power. Yet they worship Her ignorantly, through sense-gratification."²⁴ We have already noted what Swami Vivekananda thought of the American attitude to religion as such, that is, religion that did not open up avenues to earning money ; of course there were exceptions, he said. But he definitely thought that religion was not, as with his countrymen, their whole existence. The Americans have many occupations in life, he says, such as politics, social enjoyments, etc., 'anything that can give a little more whetting to the cloyed senses', and religion is one of them.²⁵

When he first came to America, Swami Vivekananda said, he was surprised to meet so many liberal men and women, but after the Parliament of Religions, a great Presbyterian paper gave him "the benefit of a seething article".²⁶ As he moved from city to city delivering lectures in which he taught the essence of the Universal Religion, incidentally refuting criticisms of the religious and social conditions in India, made by the missionaries, and exposed the questionable activities of the Christian missionaries in India, he was applauded by liberal and scientifically-minded people in their thousands, but he met with ever-increasing opposition from the orthodox people, particularly the 'church-women' and their proteges, the missionaries. The latter invented the vilest of lies concerning him, even assailing his personal character, and there was an attempt even to do away with him altogether by mixing poison with his coffee at a dinner in Detroit.²⁷ "It struck me more than once", he said regretfully in one of his speeches after his return to India, "that I should have to leave my bones on foreign shores owing to the prevalence of religious intolerance".²⁸ Yet, as

we know from him, Ingersoll had warned him, "Fifty years ago you would have been hanged in this country if you had come to preach. You would have been burned alive or you would have been stoned out of the villages".

Swami Vivekananda always spoke about the wonderful hospitality with which he was received in every country in the west²⁹, but on many occasions, in England as well as in America, as he once observed,³⁰ people behaved rudely with him, for no other fault of his than that he was not one of their own nationality, or that he put on a different dress, or spoke a different language. "When I came to this country", he once told an American audience, "and was going through the Chicago Fair, a man from behind pulled at my turban. I looked back and saw that he was a very gentlemanly-looking man, neatly dressed. I spoke to him; and when he found that I knew English, he became very much abashed. On another occasion in the same Fair another man gave me a push. When I asked him for the reason, he was abashed and stammered out an apology saying, 'Why do you dress that way?'"³¹ "Just think", he told his audience in another meeting of his in America, "with all your claims to civilization in this country, I was refused a chair to sit on, because I was a Hindu".³²

Swami Vivekananda has given us some of his other queer experiences of caste-prejudice shown against him in America in his *Memoirs of European Travel*, as follows:—"I was sorely troubled by an over-grown beard, but no sooner had I peeped into a hair-cutting saloon than somebody called out, 'This is no place for such shabby-looking people as you' (He was dressed in *gerua* and turban). . . I met the same kind of treatment in one or two saloons, after which I began the practice of shaving with my own hands. Once I was burning with hunger, and went into a restaurant and asked for a particular thing, whereupon the man said, 'We do not stock it.' 'Why, it is there'. 'Well, my good man, in plain language, it means there is no place for you to sit and take your meal'. 'And why?' 'Because nobody will eat at the same table with you, for he will be outcasted'. Then America began to look agreeable to me, somewhat like my own caste-ridden country".^{32a} In England he had similar experiences; he did not like to go out in *gerua* and turban for fear of molestation by the street arabs; on one occasion, a cartman who was transporting coal, was so angry at his

dress that he threw a very heavy lump of coal at him, fortunately missing his head by an inch.

On the whole, however, Swami Vivekananda had a high opinion of America and the Americans, and for that matter, of England and the English people also. "I love the Yankee land", he declared roundly in one of his letters written from London in May, 1896.³³ America is 'a mighty and great country';³⁴ 'in America is the place, the people, the opportunity for everything';³⁵ even in the rush of business in America he found God.³⁶ The Americans are not hypocrites.³⁷ They are a nation of scholars.³⁸ He heard about a Sanskrit library in Boston, which he once styled the Athens of America, the like of which could scarcely be met with in India.^{38a} He found Americans to be less prejudiced than the English, more ready to examine and weigh a new idea, to value it in spite of its newness, as he told the representative of *India*, a London magazine, in 1896. But the English scored above the Americans in steadiness. "Once John Bull sets the hand to a thing, he will never let it go (though he takes some time to have a go). The Americans are quick, but they are somewhat like the straw, ready to be extinguished".^{38b} He repeated these sentiments about the English in more emphatic language in his reply to the Calcutta welcome address on his return home.

There was one subject on which Swami Vivekananda always spoke very warmly and which he was never tired of repeating: it was the virtues of American women. He was on very intimate terms with many of them,—Mrs. Lyon, with whom he stayed in Chicago during the days of the session of the Parliament of Religions, who, resembling his mother in personal appearance (being short of stature and dignified in bearing), reminded him of his own mother, Mrs. George Hale and 'the Hale Sisters', with whom he generally stayed in Chicago, Mrs. Ole Bull, who gave him and his cause considerable financial help, Sister Christine, who, "of all his Western disciples, was to be with Sister Nivedita the closest to his thought", Miss Josephine McLeod, whom he addressed in his letters to her as Joe, or Joe Joe, and to whom some of his letters bearing the sublimest thoughts were written, and many others. Profuse in his praises of American women, he made an exception only in the case of the 'church-women' or the

'churchies', who, he says, were 'awful fanatics' and the chief supporters of the missionaries, who had great influence over them. His criticism against these 'titanesses' gave some interested people in America the opportunity to level a particularly unfair charge against him, viz., that he had calumniated American women. However, he recognized that a nation was not to be judged by its weaklings called the wicked, who are as only the weeds, but by the good, the noble, and the pure who indicate the national life-current to be flowing clear and vigorous. To these Swami Vivekananda has paid the sincerest tribute of his loving regards—one of the noblest tributes to women to be found in the world's literature.

We now have a picture of the political and social conditions of America and the character of American men and women at the time of Swami Vivekananda's mission. They contained many characteristics that were peculiar to the Yankee land, but many more that were common to the rest of the Western world, or of the world as a whole. Indian thought, ever in quest of unity, fixes its gaze on inner and underlying currents and not simply on the ripples that play on the surface of the ocean of life. The nexus was the energy behind the materialistic civilization of the West, the virtues of which he recognized, but which was responsible at this time for wide-spread misery for the masses in America as well as in other western lands. It was threatening the weaker peoples of the world with slavery, economic and political, and even with extinction. Civilization, said Swami Vivekananda, meant advance in spirituality, not simply capacity to produce consumer goods ministering to 'the comforts of life by bringing into use lots of machinery and things of that sort'. "The present-day civilization of the West", he said, "is multiplying day by day only the wants and distresses of men".³⁸⁰ He had no atavistic longing for the 'noble savage' of Rousseau, and was not opposed to machinery 'in small proportions', but 'too much of it', he felt, 'kills initiative and makes a life-less machine' of man. An Afridi or a Barakhzai tribesman on the North-western frontier of India, he said, fired with unerring precision, but a modern-trained soldier, equipped with the machine gun, fired 150 rounds in a minute only to heat the atmosphere. Moreover, said he, a worker in a factory, doing the same monotonous work, day after day, year after year, night after

night—each batch of men doing one special bit of work in which alone they specialized—became a lifeless machine ; and if he lost a job he had to starve and die.³⁹

What distressed him most was the exploitation of the masses, which he thought was invariably associated with materialistic civilization, its tendency of widening the gulf between the classes—the rich ever becoming richer and the poor poorer—leading inevitably to class conflict and eventual destruction. “The material tyranny”, Swami Vivekananda says, “is tremendous. The wealth and the power of a country are in the hands of a few men who do not work, but manipulate the work of millions of human beings. By this power they can deluge the whole earth with blood. Religion and all things are under their feet ; they rule and stand supreme. The western world is governed by a handful of Shylocks. All these things that you hear about—constitutional government, freedom, liberty, and parliaments—are but jokes”.⁴⁰ He wrote in the same vein in *The East and the West* :—“I have seen your Parliament, your Senate, your vote, majority, ballot : it is the same thing everywhere. The powerful men in every country are moving society whatever way they like, and the rest are only like a flock of sheep”.⁴¹ Like Voltaire, Swami Vivekananda gave out his thoughts in his talks and speeches, so many times and in so many places that they became public property long before they appeared in print. Whether, however, they sound original or not at the present day, who can question the fact that he unmasked the face of the material civilization of the West, when most of his contemporaries were singing hallelujahs to the West, and Indians were fervently praying for ‘progress’ on western lines? Swami Vivekananda was so shocked at the sight of human misery in America that he wrote the following lines to the Hale Sisters strongly criticizing America :—“Nowhere, have I heard so much of ‘love, life, and liberty’ as in this country, but nowhere is it less understood”.⁴²

The gravamen of Swami Vivekananda’s charge against western civilization was based on moral grounds—the sacrifice of principles to expediency, the exaltation of self-interest and falsification of the values of life. Students of history are familiar with the ways and means of western imperialism—deceit, treachery, cruelty, besides brute force—which have

found supporters among the liberally-minded people in every western land. Even thinkers like Lord Acton have been found to defend colonialism on the ground that it has brought inferior peoples into contact with civilized nations, and uplifted them in the scale of civilization. Swami Vivekananda exposed the hollowness of such arguments by referring to well-known historical facts in many of his speeches and writings. The following extract from *The East and the West* contains some of his telling arguments:—

“What is the meaning of the ‘progress of civilization’, which the Europeans boast so much about? The meaning of it is the successful accomplishment of the desired object by the justification of the wrong means, i.e., by making the end justify the means. It makes acts of theft, falsehood, and hanging, appear proper under certain circumstances: it vindicates Stanley’s whipping of the hungry Mohammedan guards who accompanied him for stealing a few mouthfuls of bread: it guides and justifies the well-known European ethics which says, ‘Get out from this place, I want to come in and possess it’,—the truth of which is borne out by the evidences of history, that wherever the European has gone, there has followed the extinction of the aboriginal races. In London, this ‘progress of civilization’ regards untruthfulness in conjugal life, and, in Paris, the running away of a man, leaving his wife and children helpless and committing suicide, as a mistake and not a crime”.⁴³

Particularly distasteful to Swami Vivekananda were the arguments that the prosperity of the West was due to Christianity, that the latter was on this account to be considered the best religion on earth, and that material prosperity was synonymous with, and the measure of, civilization. Even in the Parliament of Religions these arguments had been used by his critics against his faith, his mission and himself by drawing from them the conclusions that because the Hindus had never been conquerors of other lands and because, at any rate, at the present day, they were poor, their religion was false and that a Hindu had no business to preach religion in western lands. This usually drew forth from Swami Vivekananda criticism of British rule in India and of Christianity as it was understood by its followers in the West. An ardent admirer of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ,

he sternly told his Christian listeners that they did not understand the religion they professed. "All this prosperity, all this from Christ! Those who call upon Christ care for nothing but to amass riches! Christ would not find a stone on which to lay his head among you . . . You are not Christians . . . Go back to Christ", he thundered.⁴⁴ Christianity, by itself, he said, did not save Abyssinia, and it was Constantine's sword, not the saving power of the Gospels, which won for Christianity recognition as the State religion of the Roman empire. In the course of a fighting speech at Detroit (February 21, 1894), he asserted that Christianity never succeeded except with the sword, and he challenged his audience to show him one place, not two, where it had been otherwise.⁴⁵ He told his critics at Chicago that the prosperity of the English, the most Christian nation on earth, was due not to the merits of their faith but to the fact that they had their foot on the neck of 250 million Asiatics. He said that the Hindus would not have prosperity at such a price.

Swami Vivekananda pointed to the undeniable historical fact that the domination established by some of the present-day nations of the West was due to the sword. Militarism feeds on itself, nor can it place itself within limits; it leads to inevitable ruin, sooner or later. "Nations in the vigour of their youth think that they can do anything and everything . . . They think that God Almighty has given them a charter to rule over all the world . . . They have a charter to rob, murder and kill . . . So empire after empire has arisen—glorious, resplendent—now vanished away—gone, nobody knows where . . . Where is Greece? Where is Rome? Where that mighty Spaniard of the other day? Thus they are born and thus they die; they rise and fall".⁴⁶ He likened European civilization to a piece of cloth, of which the loom was a temperate, hilly country on the sea-shore, its cotton a strong, mongrel race, its warp warfare and its woof commerce.⁴⁷ He said that the object of the European nations was to exterminate all in order to live themselves.⁴⁸ History bears out that they certainly would have done so if they could; in Europe dreaming for establishing a world sway did not stop with the fall of Napoleon; only the other day Europe produced Hitler, who was within an inch of success in his plan of world-conquest.

Swami Vivekananda concluded his great paper on Hinduism, read at the Parliament of Religions, by paying an eloquent tribute to America whom he hailed as the 'motherland of liberty', who had never dipped her hand in her neighbour's blood, who never found out that the shortest way of becoming rich was by robbing one's neighbour, and to whom it had been given to march at the vanguard of civilization with the flag of harmony. This was as the occasion demanded, but he could not have been long in the country after this, when he began to move in and out of Chicago, before he must have come to know about some of the problems which were agitating the national mind and were dragging America out of her placid isolation and right into the vortex of world politics. As we have seen above, American eyes had already turned to the vast stretches of the Pacific Ocean and beyond them, both in the interests of the nation's material needs and strategy. The Republican party had begun to respond to the demands which were being advanced by powerful sections of the people for a vigorous foreign policy and, as an instrument for carrying it out, a strong navy, with its concomitants—bases and territories.

As early as 1887 a step in the direction of annexation of the strategic island of Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean had been taken with the leasing of Pearl Harbour. In 1889, a tripartite protectorate, shared by Germany and England, had been established over the Samoa islands, which were far out in the Pacific and of little commercial or strategic value. In 1892, the American residents of Hawaii engineered a revolution in the island, and the Harrison government was on the point of annexing it when the victory of the Democrats in the Presidential elections installed Cleveland in power who reversed the decision. The imperialist temper nevertheless began to rise, and in 1895, Olney, the Secretary of State of the pacific President, issued a note to England over the latter's dispute with Venezuela, declaring that his country was practically sovereign on the American continent and its fiat was law. Three years later, America entered into her first 'imperialist adventure', by declaring war on Spain. Already before the war was over, Hawaii was annexed ; it was Manifest Destiny, President McKinley said. After her defeat, Spain purchased peace with the cession of the Philippines, President McKinley's qualms about acquisition of foreign territory having

been ended by the Almighty Himself after he had been on his knees before Him in prayer for one whole night and was vouchsafed a vision!⁴⁹

Swami Vivekananda, we may be sure, deeply deplored this drift of American foreign policy, and particularly the mixture of religion with motives of sordid material gain that was sought to be done over the acquisition of the Philippines. When he reached America on his second and last visit to the country (September 1899), the Philippines had already broken out into a revolt under their heroic leader, Aguinaldo, (Feb. 4, 1899), and the harshness of the measures adopted by the American Government to quell the insurrection and speculations about the eventual fate of the islands figured often in the press and on the platform as a major political issue. Swami Vivekananda was stung to the quick to learn that one of the greatest preachers of America was advocating outright conquest on the ground that that was the only way to preach Christianity to the islanders. In a speech at Pasadena, California, on January 28, 1900, Swami Vivekananda gave vent to his feelings on the subject in the following words:—
 “They are already Catholics: but he wants to make them Presbyterians, and for this, he is ready to lay all this terrible sin of bloodshed upon his race! And this man is one of the greatest preachers of this country, one of the best-informed men. Think of the state of the world when a man like that is not ashamed to stand up and utter such arrant nonsense; and think of the state of the world when an audience cheers him! Is this civilization? It is the old blood-thirstiness of the tiger, the cannibal, the savage, coming out once more under new names, new circumstances!”⁵⁰

The state of the world, even without the religious fanatics, whom Swami Vivekananda denounced, was getting more critical every day, as he knew very well from his visits to England in 1895 and 1896 and his extensive tours on the continent during both his first and second journeys to the West. He has left for the posterity a valuable record of his impressions of some of the countries he visited in the course of his second tour (1900) in *The Memoirs of European Travel*.⁵¹ Earlier impressions were given in casual remarks he made in his speeches here and there. Even his first journey had filled him with the apprehension of an impending catastrophe, and, in his speech at the Triplicane Literary Society at Madras (1897),

which we have referred to above, he said that the western world was on a volcano, or on the edge of a precipice, and he appealed to his countrymen to go out, and conquer the world by spirituality, and thus save it. He thought that the whole of western civilization would crumble to pieces within the next fifty years if there were no spiritual foundation, which could come only from the religion of the Upanishads.⁵² A tide of world-weariness, said he, had come upon the western world, which had set its greatest leaders athinking. "They have," said he, "found out that no amount of political or social manipulation of human conditions can cure the evils of life. It is a change of the soul itself that alone can cure the evils of life".⁵³

In *The Memoirs of European Travels*, Swami Vivekananda makes acute observations on the policies and positions of the European countries he had visited, such as England, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, the Balkan States, and Turkey, and on the state of contemporary international relations. A student of history of the present day hardly finds anything which is much amiss in his analysis of the European situation. Swami Vivekananda speaks of the commanding position which Germany had acquired for herself, of her military and fast-increasing naval power, of the products of German industries which were superior to and pushing out British merchandise even in the British colonies, and of her hardy population, which was rapidly multiplying. About France, for which he had a deep sympathy, he says that 'the moon was setting'; she was 'slowly consuming herself in the fire of contemplated retribution'. Austria-Hungary, shorn of her former glory and power, thanks to her defeat at the hands of Prussia, was slowly dying. If Turkey was the 'sick man' of Europe, Austria-Hungary was the 'sick dame'; she was somehow maintaining herself. He speaks of the problem of races and languages in Austria-Hungary, and observes that it was an insoluble one. Swami Vivekananda says that after the death of Francis Joseph II, the then Austrian Emperor, who was very old, and not expected to live long, Germany would try to seize the German-speaking parts of Austria-Hungary in which case there would be a dreadful war in which Russia, who would dislike further aggrandizement of Germany, and Turkey which was the ally of Germany would be involved. This

prophecy was not so wide of the mark as it seems to be at first sight ; Francis Joseph died only in 1916, and in due time, there came Hitler, who absorbed German-Austria, thus reacting to the situation spoken of by Swami Vivekananda in the manner envisaged by him. 'The dreadful war' Swami Vivekananda spoke of did come, though not exactly in the manner and time he thought of.

Swami Vivekananda speaks of the embarrassing position in which Italy found herself placed—with Austria-Hungary nursing feelings of enmity against her on account of past history, and championing, as the only Catholic power left in Europe, the Temporal Power of the Papacy, which Italy had robbed ; setting herself under England's misdirection, to build up a big army and navy and thus getting into serious financial difficulties ; and beaten by Abyssinia, sinking down, bereft of glory and prestige. The persistence of feelings of enmity between Italy and Austria-Hungary and Italy's leanings towards England, which Swami Vivekananda speaks of, are borne out by later developments. In spite of her membership of the Triple Alliance, which was renewed in 1887, Italy, we know, pursued a policy of hostility towards Austria-Hungary, as is evidenced by her concluding the so-called Racconigi Agreement with Russia in 1900, and, what was more serious, coming to an understanding with France in 1902.

There were only three civilized nations in Europe, viz., England, France, and Germany, said Swami Vivekananda, the rest being as badly off as Indians, and some very uncivilized indeed. As regards Serbia and Bulgaria, who had freed themselves from Turkish yoke after much bloodshed, he says they were extremely poor, in spite of which fact they had to bear a very heavy load of armaments, without which they could not retain their independence for a day. Swami Vivekananda predicted that they would all be absorbed by Russia sooner or later. Of course, Czarist Russia has vanished, and so the prophecy could not materialize in the way he anticipated. But it is a notorious fact that Soviet Russia has converted Bulgaria and Rumania into her satellites, and only Yugoslavia is not so absorbed, though she is Communist. He speaks of the Hungarians as possessing vitality. Swami Vivekananda did not visit Russia, but he met Prince Kropotkin at Paris, and he must have learned from him about the revolu-

tionary movement that was secretly in progress in that country. According to Sister Christine, Swami Vivekananda predicted that the next revolution would break out either in Russia or China.

It filled Swami Vivekananda's heart with sadness to note how, with the spread of materialistic civilization in Europe, the modes of life of every nation were becoming similar ; food, dress, personal habits, etc. were conforming to an unvarying pattern—regimented, that is to say, as the modern expression goes. "It is a law of nature", he remarked, "that such are the symptoms of death!" Under such circumstances, he explains, men gradually become mere automata ; life having gone out of them, they move about simply like so many machines! "Machines", said he , "never say 'yea' or 'nay', never trouble their heads about anything, they move on: 'in the way their forefathers have gone', and then rot and die. The Europeans, too, will share the same fate!" What saddened him again were the preparations for war which he found were going on in every country of Europe. France, advised by Gambetta (as we know), never to talk about and always to think of *ravanche*, had introduced conscription, and Germany having 'set the lion to fury' and dreading it, followed suit. Even the smallest countries in Europe, Swami Vivekananda noticed, were arming themselves to the teeth, in self-defence, and with the result that the masses had to go in rags while soldiers were dressed in brilliant uniforms. "Throughout Europe", said he, "there is a craze for soldiers—soldiers, soldiers everywhere". He predicted that within fifty years Europe would crumble to pieces if she did not modify her position. In 1947, exactly fifty years after he uttered these words of warning, Western Europe, shattered to pieces as the result of the Second World War, had to accept foreign aid so that she might survive—in freedom—and escape the dreadful alternative of losing all her cultural values by passing under Communist dictatorship.

Will Europe perish? It is really difficult to answer this question ; her fate, and, under the present circumstances, along with hers that of humanity itself, hangs in the balance,—for, if there is another World War, nuclear weapons will surely be used and modern instruments of mass destruction—the megaton bombs and I.C.B.M.'s—are capable of extinguishing every form of life that exists on this fair planet of ours. Outwardly,

the West is still on the old ruts ; unmindful of the lessons of history, they are engaged there in the old race of armaments while the rival combinations of nations—the present-day blocs—cover nearly the entire world ; test bans, disarmament, etc., in spite of interminable talks, look like vain dreams ; the so-called nuclear balance, or balance of terror, is little better than the proverbial straw that a drowning world is catching at. On the other hand, there are some signs of the awakening of the spirit in the world today ; the incubus of imperialism is well nigh exorcised, and very few nations still groan under alien rule ; science has made such strides in the last few years that man literally hopes to reach the stars ; time and space being practically conquered there are at present such interminglings of peoples and such exchanges of their thoughts as have never been possible in all history. Swami Vivekananda declared that the world could be saved only if it accepted Upanishadic thought ; by that he did not mean any rigid philosophical doctrine ; he meant that the mind of humanity must awaken to the call of the spirit, instead of remaining for ever engrossed in the delectable pleasures of the senses. Schopenhauer predicted a permeation of western materialistic thought by the Upanishads—they were a solace to him in life, and would be a solace to him in death, he said—far more extensive and far more powerful in its consequences than the intermingling of ancient classical thought and mediaeval scholastic ideas that brought about the Renaissance. The process of permeation has been going on ; Swami Vivekananda well nigh accomplished it when, by his herculean labours, he removed the greatest obstacle that lay in its path, the feeling of contempt that the power-intoxicated peoples of the West cherished for the teachings of the meek, servile Hindu. It is difficult to estimate the progress that has taken place since his time in this direction—the meeting of the East and the West, the co-operation between religion and science—for which the greatest minds of the world have been ever working, and for which Swami Vivekananda lived—and died. Did he work and die in vain ? Even though the long, dark night is not yet over, are there not signs of the coming of the day of glory for humanity ? *Abhik.*

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA—A WORLD FIGURE

I became acquainted with the great things that Swami Vivekananda did for the first time in my 13th year, a short while after Swami Vivekananda had passed away. We had in our school, Motilal Seal's Free College in Calcutta, a little reading club. In this reading club we had a class-mate who later on became distinguished as a medical man, Major Prabhat Kumar Bardhan of the I.M.S. His father, the late Chandi Charan Bardhan, was a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna himself and a friend of Vivekananda. Prabhat's father used to run a school in his house in Serpentine Lane within the Bow Bazar area—the 'Hindu Boys' School', and in this school he had built up a little library. I began to borrow books from there and I made a discovery of the works of Vivekananda in both English and Bengali, and also found a mass of literature on Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. This discovery made me quite enthusiastic, and my friend Prabhat took the initiative in introducing Vivekananda to our reading club. There, before half-a-dozen young enthusiasts, Prabhat Kumar Bardhan would be declaiming in English Vivekananda's lectures from the volume named *From Colombo to Almora* and from his Bengali books like *Prachya O Paschattya* and *Parivrajaka*. This was my first introduction to Vivekananda.

What could I receive from him as a boy of 13? It was, in the first instance, a sense of the Infinite, and the necessity and duty of man to realise within himself this Infinite and at the same time to put himself in tune with It by leading a normal—a moral and a natural and altruistic life.

Vivekananda appeared to me immediately to be a man who was intensely moved by the sufferings of Humanity, and particularly of Humanity in India. Some of his tirades against middle class and upper class societies in this matter moved us to the depths of our being. He discovered for us the greatness of Man, and particularly of men in the humbler walks of life who were the despised and the denied in our Indian society. At the same time, he brought home to us the value of Indian thought at its highest and pristine best, as in the *Vedanta*. He was able to convince us that what our ancestors had left in the *Vedanta* Philosophy

was of permanent value, not only for us in India but also for the rest of Humanity. This put heart in us, and made us feel a new kind of elation as members of a people who have always had a mission and a sacred task to serve Humanity. The Hindus as a race were losing their nerve, and it was Vivekananda who helped us to regain this nerve which we were losing. There was a lot of unthinking and unsympathetic criticism of our ways and our life, particularly from among Christian missionaries of the older type, and this was demolished by Vivekananda. All this made us hold him very close to our heart, and to think of him as a great master and as a new kind of incarnation who came down to earth to lead us into the good life and the life of the strong man.

Vivekananda, in the first instance, knocked off a lot of nonsense in our Hindu social life, and drew our attention to the Eternal Verities and not to the ephemeral accidentals—social usages and such like—in our life. He was a sworn enemy of what we now call in India *Casteism*. *Untouchability* was something which he abhorred both as a *Sannyasin* and as a lay Hindu. He coined the word which is very commonly used in our Indian English—"don't-touchism". His heart overflowed with love and sympathy for the masses, whom he wanted to serve with religious zeal—serve as a believer in the *Vedanta* which sees God in all life. He coined a new word for our Indian languages—*Daridra-Narayana* or a "God in the poor and the lowly." This word has been accepted by the whole of India, and in a way it brings in a sense of responsibility for the average man. He has to look upon the poor and the humble, the suffering ones and the frustrated ones of society, as if they were deities incarnate or fragments of God, to serve whom was to serve God. Mahatma Gandhi's revival of the old expression which was used in Gujarati by the Vaishnava poets of Gujarat, namely, *Hari-jana* or "the Men of God" was a very fine expression; but *Daridra-Narayana* implied or brought in an element of a sense of duty which was enjoined upon man to serve the poor if they wanted to serve God.

Swami Vivekananda is looked upon as a great religious teacher, and indeed he made a definite contribution to the study of both Hindu religion and philosophy, and also in spreading a knowledge and appreciation of this philosophy and religion. His great works on aspects of *Vedanta*

in theory and practice still inspire hundreds and thousands of enquirers all over the world. But it has also been said that he was more a philanthropist, one who dedicated himself to the service of man, than a religious theorist or preacher. One need not seek to analyse Vivekananda's personality in this way. It is best to take the service of man as a form of serving God, for, from the point of view of all practical religion, God and Man are the obverse and reverse of the same medal. Vivekananda may be said to have been an innovator in two matters. As his great disciple Sister Nivedita suggested—he was the first to formulate the basic character of Hinduism as a system of thought and as a way of life in the modern age. This is the first great thing we as Indians may note about Vivekananda. Secondly, Vivekananda may be said to have brought before the Western World a new point of view in religious thinking—a new approach to the problems of faith—which they needed very badly. To this also might be added as a pendant that Vivekananda, as one of the thought-leaders of modern India, gave the tone to modern Indian culture. He conceived of an integration of all human religion and culture into one entity claiming the homage of all and sundry.

I consider, and many agree with me also, that Swami Vivekananda's participation and his magisterial and at the same time sweet and reasonable pronouncements at the International Congress of Religions at Chicago in 1893 form a very important event in the intellectual history of modern man. There he proclaimed for the first time the necessity for a new and an enlightened kind of religious understanding and toleration, and this was particularly necessary in an America which was advancing so rapidly in science and technology, and in wealth and power, which were not, however, divorced from altruistic aspirations and achievements. But apart from a few of the most outstanding figures, particularly in the New England orbit of the United States, generally the religious background was crude and primitive. It had pinned itself down to a literal interpretation of the Bible, and accepted all the dogmas with a conviction which was pathetic in its combination of sincerity and fanatic faith, of credulity and crudity. This very primitive kind of religion was not satisfying to those who were actuated by the spirit of enquiry in a higher and more cultured plane, and

for them Vivekananda's message came like rain on a thirsty soil. The result has been that gradually the primitive crudities of religion as believed in by most of the people lost its old-world character. Instead of a very literal interpretation of the myths and legends as well as traditions of the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New, the necessity for a more reasonable approach gradually dawned on the mind of Christian America. The result of this I found, when, during my student days in London 40 years ago—in 1921—I met with a young American who was in training for missionary work. I was very much impressed by his earnestness and his spirit of accommodation. One day while conversing with him, he made this astounding statement to me—and that coming from a man who was professedly a Christian was astounding indeed, considering the ordinary run of Christians that we were accustomed to come in touch with. He said: "I am going to preach the message of Christ among peoples of other cultures and religions. But my intention will never be to convert people to the Christian creed. I shall try to the best of my power to help people to lead the good life, as much as is possible in their own environment; and if a man can lead the good life, I would say from my point of view that he has realised Christ in his life." I was very much impressed, and I said: "I can shake hands with you over this. That is exactly our Hindu way of approaching people in the domain of religion." I was reminded at once of what Vivekananda had said in one of his Chicago addresses: "Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid." A similar expansion of the mental and spiritual horizon of the average Western Christian man we find in the sincere appreciation by Christian missionaries and thought-leaders, in India as well as in Europe and America, of Mahatma Gandhi, a non-Christian, who was described as being in his spiritual and practical life "a true Christian."

The Indian idea was to make a man find out the best that he can in his environment, and live up to it in all sincerity. The Hindu conception has been what was described by Paramahansa Ramakrishna Deva, in the form of an aphorism: *Jato mat, tato path*, that is, "As many opinions, so many ways." This point of view, namely, that God has also spoken to men who

are living in religious atmospheres other than the Christian, and that God is the God of all Mankind and not the favouring deity for this or that religion or church or denomination, is a truism, which the mind of the average individual in society which believed in a scriptural religion was as yet far from understanding or appreciating. So in this way, we might say that quite a new type of spiritual conversion has taken place in the mind of a considerable portion of intelligent men and women in the West, beginning with America; and here we see the leaven of *Vedanta* working through Vivekananda. In a novel on Mexican life by D. H. Lawrence—*The Plumed Serpent*—where we have the picture of a revival of the pre-Catholic Aztec religion among a section of political workers in Mexico, the mentality displayed by some of the leaders of this movement is something astoundingly modern. Many of the views expressed by one of the characters in this novel, the hero Ramón talking to the Roman Catholic Bishop, might have been taken over bodily from the writings of Vivekananda. In this way, although the ordinary run of people are not conscious of it, the message which was given out by Vivekananda to America and the Western World at Chicago in 1893, and subsequently to people in America, England and India, has been an effective force in the liberalisation of the human spirit in its religious approach.

The first point in Vivekananda which I mentioned above, namely, his giving before the world a definition of Hinduism in its essence, was a service which was done not only to India but also in another way to Humanity. Vivekananda asked us to pin our faith to the basic things in Hindu religion, things which have a value not only for ourselves in the modern world but also for other peoples. He wanted us to focus our attention to what is known as the *Nitya Dharma*, and not to the *Laukika Dharma*, that is to say, to the Eternal Verities which are true for all ages and climes, and not to the accidentals of social usage and etiquette which frequently pass as religion. He had a robust mind which could boldly receive from outsiders what was necessary for us in India, and what we did not have ourselves. That is why he did not scruple to model his monastic order on certain aspects of Christian missions; and indeed, he did not fight shy of taking over bodily the English word 'Mission' (*Mishan*), and to call



Swami Vivekananda After the Parliament of Religions.

his organisation *the Ramakrishna Mission* ; just as in the political field, slightly earlier than that of the foundation of the *Ramakrishna Mission* by Vivekananda, the leaders of the Nationalist Movement in India boldly called their organisation *the Indian National Congress*, and the word 'Congress' very soon became an Indian word (*Kangres*), and the organization is known to all and sundry as the 'Congress'.

Vivekananda was the lover of all those who had suffered through the injustice of others, and he tried his best to restore them to a sense of human dignity. He was not the person to go on suffering meekly, and to advise others to do so. His was always a questioning mind, and he was in favour of bold action—timidity had no appeal for him. That is why he said on one occasion, "Religion is that which strengthens, and irreligion is that which weakens." It is remarkable how in India in her days of political submission and spiritual inanity, when everything seemed hopeless, and the people had lost all confidence in themselves, a spirit calling us to action like Swami Vivekananda could come into being. That such a person could come at a time when the prospect was bleak, when we seemed to have lost all hope, indicated that God in His mercy never forsakes His people, and this in a way bears out the great idea behind this oft-quoted verse of the *Gita* that whenever righteousness is on the decline and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, God creates Himself as a great *Avatara* or Incarnation—as a Leader to guide men to the right path of salvation. And in that sense Vivekananda was an *Avatara*, a divinely inspired and God-appointed Leader, not only for Man in India, but also for the whole of Humanity in the present age.

THE INFLUENCE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON WORLD THOUGHT—TEACHER OF MANKIND—(FUTURE ROLE OF VEDANTA AND SCIENCE)

“Footprints on the sands of time” are a measure of a great man’s influence on his people, his country and even the world. The picture of Swami Vivekananda I have most in view is the one with a staff in hand, the leonine king among men in a mendicant’s robe. His staff is indeed a royal flagstaff and the footprints are deep set. While sands disperse with the wind and prints disappear in course of time, what the Swami has left behind will endure and expand. Dynamism during life time and diffusion thereafter with the rapidity of a forest fire have been the characteristics of his influence both at home and abroad.

What is this influence that affects and gives a character to world thought? One may well ask whether the masses in India and in countries all over the world have awakened to the Swami’s teachings and started living up to them. You will be sorely wrong if you try to assess this in terms of numbers of followers, offices and edifices. A politician can muster thousands of listeners and raise millions for a political cause. A warlord would have millions at his command, ready to reshape or misshape the lives of many. A tycoon possesses the resources to contribute to the happiness of many, probably at the expense of the exploited. Where does a mendicant in his dust-brown robe stand by comparison? What influence can he have on world-thought, or, even the thought of his own strife-torn ageing country for the matter of that, after having renounced worldly life and the means of controlling the engines of mundane power?

Herein however lies the basic source of the influence invisible but inexorable, the great secret of success, clerical and temporal, which we come across in the teachings of the Swami. As Tagore wrote in another context, “I shall attain Thee, the Supreme Treasure, by renouncing all other riches.” The Swami wanted to awaken the Spirit in man, “to guide individuals and nations to the conquest of their inner kingdom, by their own ways which are best suited to them, by the means corresponding best to the needs from which they suffer most.”

It is this pursuit which is the supreme need of all times and which never comes to an end. Sages in all ages have engaged in this and preached it in different areas of influence with varying measures of success. Some have established great religious systems and orders ennobling man's vision and enriching his life. Some have not founded any institutional religions but have evolved philosophies to train up thoughts in particular directions. Others, perhaps many of them unknown and unchronicled in the pages of history, have realised God and got immersed in Him, thought and soul. To recall a favourite saying of Sri Ramakrishna, they are like the dolls of salt. They go to the sea to measure its salinity and lose themselves body and soul into the parent reservoir.

The Swami does not exactly fit in with any of these categories. And herein, to my mind, lies his unique position in the realm of world thought. And yet the question can be raised that if he has not specifically functioned in any of the three roles, on what exactly is based his influence on mankind. Let us examine this step by step from the layman's point of view.

Here, in all humility, I must express my apprehension and crave everybody's pardon for having ventured into a field where much wiser scholars would fear to tread. I have no pretence to scholarship, religious lore or spiritual uplift. What supplies me courage to write this view point is the infinite compassion and tolerance that I realise will be extended to a layman like me whose association with the Swami's teachings started in his school days at the feet of Shri "M". At that age of innocence and hankering for knowledge without sophistication, light without coloured glasses and lessons without interpretations, one may learn something which may be not quite correct in the eyes of a doctrinaire, but is sincerely appealing to the heart of a devotee. I also realise that in writing or feeling about religion and philosophy it is easily possible to misunderstand or misinterpret and in any event to err even with the best of intentions. But it is also for ordinary laymen like this humble writer, for whom or on whose behalf the great Swami spoke, to cherish his teachings in heart and carry them to the rest of their kind. "They also serve who stand and wait."

Like charity, religion also begins at home. So at home, at Belur, within the sight of the sacred place where Sri Ramakrishna revealed his gospel,

the Swami established the Math to provide men with the means "to attain their own liberation, so that they might prepare themselves for the progress of the world and the betterment of its conditions." The betterment should start with the humblest of the humble first and therefore he had uppermost in his mind the *Daridra Narayana*—the God in the poor, "the only God that exists, the only God in whom I believe, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races." Service of the poor has always been a part of religious charity. Often "pity gave ere charity began". But neither was enough. It did neither ennoble the giver, nor elevate the recipient. The Swami raised this service to the dignity of religion and gave it a divine halo never dreamt of before. It gave a new shape to the spirit of service, first in India and gradually in the rest of the world. Serving the poor God is not the same as opening of poor homes and free kitchens for the famished. As Sri Ramakrishna said, religion is not for empty stomachs. The Upanishads have stated that the spirit is not attained by the weakling. The Swami proceeded in a more concrete way to find the spirit in the weakling and awaken them to the consciousness of the spirit in themselves. Feeding them is not enough. They must be taught to work for it themselves. As a youngster in the school I had heard people criticising Henry Ford for not giving portions of his fabulous earnings in charity and for ploughing it back to business to expand the field of employment. Acquainted with the teachings of the Swami I perceived in Ford's action an element of the former's concept of religion. "Him I call a Mahatma whose heart bleeds for the poor" wrote the Swami to his Indian disciples in 1894-95. We should now judge all genuine philanthropists in this light. To the Swami man is the greatest symbol of God and his worship the highest form of worship. This message naturally has an imperishable influence over the whole of mankind.

That this concept has secured firm roots both in India and in the world at large as well is clear from the way people and areas in distress during famines and floods look up to the Ramakrishna Mission for succour, the way the national Government of the country and an enlarging number of foreign institutions are co-operating freely with the Mission in its manifold acts of service to the people. The noble fervour with which

foundations have sprung up in prosperous countries for service to brethren in less developed countries is also a silent but significant tribute to the influence of Vivekananda's teachings. It will be irrelevant to try to quote chapters and verses to establish relationship between these teachings and the international institutions of individual trusts or organisations. But can one doubt the normal and spiritual support, if not inspiration, that his teachings lend to their activities? Indeed, ideas recognise no frontiers and like tongues of flame leaping across the forest they envelop noble minds imperceptibly, unconsciously. Vivekananda himself would have been the first person to decline to trace any connection between his teachings and the institutions of special service to humanity set up in association with the highest world organisation in politics, viz. the United Nations. Nevertheless, the new concept generated by him does clothe them with an aura of selfless service which borders on acts of religion.

The major part of the finances of these institutions is provided by the better-off States so that the poorer ones are served. The gift neither demeans the recipient, nor inebriates the donor. The cynic and the politician may see in this an ultimate material purpose, an incipient political objective. But the fact remains that a new concept of universal service has been born, a concept with a new emphasis on man. To quote the words of Christ, "For inasmuch as ye have done it unto the last of these my brethren, ye have done unto me." So long as this teaching was an inspiration to people for practising philanthropy and humanitarian works emphasis was laid on the act and not the attitude behind it. The doctrine of *niskamakarma*, i.e., act without attachment propounded by the *Gita*, was more often than not totally overlooked even in India. But the Swami ushered into the world the old concept in a new context, to see God in man and to worship him not with prayers but service. World thought has been perceptibly influenced by it and the world cannot resile from it any longer. The awakened conscience of the haves will henceforth see in the have-nots the God in human frame to be served and saved.

Followed from this the new concept of worship also. The selfishness of purely contemplative faith, detached from human sorrows and sufferings and practised in far away seclusion, was exposed to the world for the first

time in no uncertain terms. Occasionally in the past *sadhus* in India and organised friars in other parts of the world descended upon the field of human activity in the shape of workers and even warriors. Some obviously had no real spirit of worship, while others had material gains to pursue. Others concentrated on meditation and religious observances only for their personal salvation. They forgot even what the *Gita* and other great religious scriptures emphasise: do not be tempted by philosophy to inaction. The *Gita* says: "At least for sustenance of life you have to work. Therefore do the work you are called upon in duty to do. Work done as it should be is better than abstention." But many monks through the ages were probably afraid of straying from the path of God by getting involved in service to humanity. They could not, unlike the Swami, muster the confidence to leave aside reading scriptures, practising meditations and offering prayers in order to devote themselves to the service of others. But the Swami could easily relegate those things for performance in another life if need be, and dedicate this one to the service of humanity. This living hymn of service to humanity declared: "Only a great monk (in the widest sense: a man vowed to the service of the Absolute) can be a great worker; for he is without attachments. . . . There were no greater workers than Buddha and Christ. . . . No work is secular. All work is adoration and worship." Sri Ramakrishna has a beautiful simile, a message of hope for even the busy and worn-out householder who can still pursue the path of God while remaining in the world. He should put himself in the position of a maid-servant. She is dutifully busy during the whole day and the waking hours of the night serving her masters, but she knows that the household and its material interests do not belong to her. In her heart she is also apart and has her own interests, her own beloved to think of. To him is she devoted in the heart of her heart.

President Frederic B. Robinson of the College of the City of New York summarised the essential teachings of Sri Ramakrishna as below:

1. To find God man must look within and the goal is attained when there is a realisation of oneness with God.
2. There is good in all religious systems. They are but different languages or modes of expression suitable to people of different countries,

speeches and circumstances. Properly pursued all lead to the one realisation. Therefore creeds and rituals are but incidents ; the essential helps to realisation are love and sincerity.

3. But realisation for self, or self-salvation is not enough ; there is need to bring others to this realisation.

It was therefore natural that the Swami's little band of apostles formed a permanent organisation not unlike that of St. Francis of Assissi. While seeking mastery over themselves so that their souls might be unhampered and untrammelled by the material life they experienced the love of all men and all things as a beginning that would lead to the disinterested love of God in the absolute sense.

In a flaming passion of anguish the Swami once cried out: "May I be born and reborn again and suffer a thousand miseries if only I am able to worship the only God in whom I believe, the sum-total of all souls, and above all my God the wicked, my God the afflicted, my God the poor of all races."

He was not worried in the least about the salvation of the monks of the Ramakrishna Order. They would, according to him, go down into hell, if need be, to save others. To think of their salvation, he argued, was unworthy of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Their liberation is secured, if you are sceptical about it, by that fact alone. On the other hand, there has been enough of the sterile God of solitary prayers. Let them worship the Living God, the Coming God, dwelling in all living souls. No wonder, side by side with the elevation of spirit came the doom of the degrading limitations of the caste system and social and conventional prejudices against women's education and emancipation. The Swami's influence in these spheres in the whole world is as real as it is permanent.

On one occasion as he saw people going to a temple for worship he said : "Where shall you go to seek Brahman? . . . He is immanent in all beings. Here, here is the visible Brahman ! . . . Here is the Brahman before you, as tangible as fruit in your hand." In short man became the highest symbol of God and his worship the highest form of worship on earth.

Divine understanding and human affection can quite conceivably lend themselves to the service of all and go hand in hand to a great extent.

The final stage of absorption into the good, the absolute divinity, is probably an intensely individual affair which others cannot penetrate from outside and the traditionalist may want to keep to his own tradition. Without entering into any argument over this we can clearly assert that the doctrine of divinity in man was fully brought to the world's attention by Vivekananda and has come to stay as a legacy permanent for the world.

While pondering over the Swami's influence on world thought we should assess the extent and depth of his influence on India itself. Here again we come to the key of his teachings. During the great epidemic of the plague in Calcutta in 1899 a religious scholar complained that he was not getting any opportunity to discuss religion with the Swami. He replied, "So long as even a single dog in my country is without food my whole religion will be to feed it". He exhorted that one should begin by giving one's life to save the life of the dying. That was to him the essence of religion. This was a new thought, a life-giving nectar churned out of the ocean of poison that had kept India in stupor through centuries. A new India, shaking off its slumber and vibrating in the quest of resurgent life came up to receive his teaching. Generally speaking, the Nineteenth century marked the great period of preparation for India's present destiny and the Swami's message, coming towards the end of the century, sounded the final clarion call. There was no longer any doubt as to the path India would take, the nature of her march and the objective in the making. The Indian National Congress had been ushered into existence, the demand for Home Rule voiced and the lessons of the West taken into the heart. Even hatred of the foreign rulers and violence to drive them away reared their heads. Many tried to enlist the band of devoted workers of the Order in the cause of political freedom. But Vivekananda analysed the cause of India's bondage at its very root and was not blind in his exuberance of emotion. In his *Mission of the Vedanta* he wrote: "Not the English. . . It is we who are responsible for all our. . . degradation. Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the common masses of our country under foot. . . so that they are made to believe that they are born as slaves, born as hewers of wood and drawers of water." In retrospect and bearing in mind the stages of

our national struggle we can very well realise now how essential it was for our leaders to understand this question of self-analysis first.

The Swami had a superior approach based on religion, a godly vision of nationalism not turning away even from the enemy, the foreigner who also after all is as much a part of the God in the world as his own countrymen. On his return to India from England he proclaimed: "No one ever landed on English soil with more hatred in his heart for a race than I did for the English. . . . There is none among you who loves the English people more than I do now". This catholicity of outlook, this ability to look for the best in the remotest, to embrace the enemy to make him a friend, has not only been the forerunner of the Anglo-Indian relations after Indian independence but also given birth to a new concept in the history of international relations.

And yet the Swami viewed man as a man and not a puny political being. In his last hour he repeated, "India is immortal if she persists in her search for God. If she gives it up for politics she will die".¹ To the politician trained in the traditional methods of the struggle for freedom it may appear paradoxical that complete dedication to the worship of God in man could include such thorough detachment from politics and yet was designed to uplift his lot. This repudiation of politics was, however, a creed and not convenience, and was faithful to the spirit of the whole body of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. The Swami wanted to create men. Time and again he asserted how the destiny of the country would be changed if he could create only a handful of men.

Such is the stuff the freedom-fighters should be made of and no wonder his writings were found among the possessions of many revolutionaries also. Pre-eminently pro-Indian, his teachings influenced silently but significantly the profoundest elements of Indian nationalism. A concrete proof of this influence lies in the fact that the Government of Bengal in its Administration Report of 1915 accused the Ramakrishna Mission and its founders of having been the first instigators of Indian nationalism. Next year the Governor of Bengal announced publicly that terrorists were becoming members of the Order in order to achieve their ends with more ease. Its existence would have been in jeopardy but for the efforts of some

devoted English and American friends. The posthumous influence of the Swami on world thought was already in the making.

In an indirect manner also Vivekananda influenced world thought by influencing unmistakably the three great leaders of India in different directions who in their turn have left profound impressions on the world. To quote Romain Rolland, "The present leaders of India: the king of thinkers, the king of poets and the Mahatma—Aurobindo Ghosh, Tagore and Gandhi—have grown, flowered and borne fruit under the double constellation of the Swan and the Eagle—a fact publicly acknowledged by Aurobindo and Gandhi." "As for Tagore, whose Goethe-like genius stands at the junction of all the rivers of India, it is permissible to presume that in him are united and harmonised the two currents of the Brahmo Samaj (transmitted to him by his father, the *Maharshi*) and of the new Vedantism of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Rich in both, free in both, he has serenely wedded the West and the East in his own spirit . . . There is no doubt that the breath of such a Forerunner must have played some part in his evolution." One could go farther and trace in some of Tagore's immortal poems and prose writings the undeniable and indelible influence of the Swami. Consider for example Tagore's poem on renunciation: "Deliverance for me is not in renunciation", and compare it with the Swami's saying, uttered earlier: "Of what consequence is it to the world if you or I attain *Mukti* (Deliverance)? We have to take the whole world to *Mukti*."²

Consider, again, the immortal lines of Tagore's sonnet that 'if the world passes on in tears how could I sit alone pursuing my own salvation.' Here you see Vivekananda in poem.

One treads on delicate grounds while comparing great men, their achievements and their influences on one another, particularly if they happen to be almost contemporaries. Mistakes in assessment may creep in, visions may be clouded and hero worship may get the better of sober judgment. Nevertheless the influence of the saintly warrior or heroic saint runs unmistakably through the generations that have been nurtured in our century and stabilised with a pyramid of ideas, with those of the Swami forming the base and also the apex. The quintessence of his teaching lies in strength, a strength which has been reflected in a superabundant measure

in the teachings of Aravinda, Rabindranath and Gandhi. The world of thought in the whole world has been enriched by them. Gandhi's non-violent struggle for independence which has affected every single life in India in our generation derived its sustenance from the same strength. The Swami's assertion that "it is weakness which conceives the idea of resistance" summarised and gave the highest possible ethical interpretation in advance to the philosophy of Gandhi's non-violent struggle for independence. Witness the reflection of the same strength in the movement of Martin Luther King in the very country where the Swami first revealed his armour of monastic strength. The ultimate result will be not only the India of Swami's dreams but all other countries that look up to the sun of liberty and want to wake up, regenerate and resurgent, marching side by side with all the progressive elements of the earth towards One World.

This conception of One World was an integral part of the Swami's mental make-up and gave him the moral strength for preaching the same to the whole world. He was the great mediator between the East and the West, and while bringing the message of the East to the West he unhesitatingly took his dip deep in the spring of Western life and anointed the West with the East's life-giving waters. It was not only the unexpected flame of spirituality that leapt up in several significant hearts in America during his first impact on the youngest nation, but also the active vital humanitarianism and organisation of the West which he could accept at once for transmission to his ancient nation. He could have stopped with the ideal of discovering and declaring the unity of all forms of Hinduism and become the great Messiah of the ancient religion. He would have earned unrepayable gratitude of India and the East, if not of the whole world, by resting with the establishment of the message of the East and bringing it to the doorstep of the West. But his restless soul could not possibly be satisfied with an incomplete picture and partial service to humanity. He wrote from Paris to his orthodox disciples in India, "I belong to India just as much as to the world." Indeed by taking up the role of a world teacher he was bringing out to the world the essence of unity, of universal religion, "whoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him," "All men are struggling through paths which in the end lead

to Me". According to the Swami "the Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the other and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth . . . Every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character . . . Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in spite of . . . resistance ; 'Help and not Fight', 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension'."3

There are countless spiritual treasures scattered all over not only in the scientifically inclined West but also in the politically awakening regions of the East. Still the Swami's message has appeared to the world as the sorely needed healing balm or reviving elixir. In a frank discussion with a highly intellectual but not necessarily spiritually inclined Western friend of mine on the extent of the influence of this message it was I who raised a query whether it was as widespread as it ought to be in the interest of mankind. It was left to my friend to explain at length some extremely significant points in this respect.

First, all great messages take time to secure and develop roots in the human soil, a soil that is discriminative in its acceptance even when not barren or impervious. The teachings of Christ required centuries of selfless sacrifice to penetrate the core of Europe's pagan crust. The teachings of the Buddha had to wait for nearly three hundred years till the appearance of Asoka as an emperor whose material might was transformed into religious fervour after a career of ruthless wars. The teachings of Vivekananda have had a much earlier and more extensive start in an age in which general education, progress of rationalism and amenities of life render new ideas, particularly religious ideas, less urgent than in those ages in which darkness of the soul and thirst for knowledge found ready relief in religious doctrines. A parched throat readily drinks in water, almost any water that comes its way. When generally satisfied, the same throat will choose its drink and may defer it till a more inviting one is available. Noble ideas like those propounded by the Swami are present in the world to-day invisibly, imperceptibly, like the general moisture prevailing in the climate of Bengal. It requires a thunder cloud charged with electricity and laden

with rain to make an impression there. It has to be realised that the teachings of Vivekananda have emerged and become enshrined in many hearts in this century, of all centuries.

Secondly, all great thoughts in their most significant aspects have, particularly at the beginning, their seed beds in the hearts of only a few. My friend referred to the influence of the Buddha, Tolstoy and Lincoln to prove his point in three different fields. Their activities have had far-reaching effects on the lives of millions. But in terms of the statistics of crimes and murders the countries professing Buddhism, my Western friend argued, are not more non-violent in nature than, for instance, their immediately neighbouring countries. Nevertheless the doctrine of non-violence as a spiritual weapon even in a material struggle for independence has won universal acceptance in India where Buddhism as a professed religion hardly exists. There is, moreover, genuine admiration for Buddhism all over the world. The principle of non-violence has come to stay as a potent contribution to human thought and activity. Similarly, Tolstoy's ideals may on the face of it have been ignored in his own country and elsewhere. But the care of and solicitation for the proletariat are such definite factors in public life to-day that his influence on them is undeniable. Lincoln's ideal of liberty and liberalism has brought political freedom to those on whom he wanted to have it conferred. But a powerful section of the society in his own country is still resisting it on a social level while in the world at large it has been hailed as a landmark in the progress of humanism.

Thus influence works in different ways in different areas and cases. It cannot be judged precisely in terms of the number of followers, parties and countries. Time alone is the final judge. But the quality of the people influenced and the number of people ultimately affected certainly have a bearing on the question. Viewed that way no body can deny that the influences of the Buddha, Tolstoy and Lincoln are permanent assets to mankind all the world over and have definitely altered the sense of values. As Aldous Huxley has written, "We cannot see the moon and the stars so long as we choose to remain within the aura of street lamps and whisky advertisements. We cannot even hope to discover what is happening in the East, if we turn our faces and feet towards the West."

Fortunately for the world Vivekananda, the great mediator between the East and the West, has had his influence on so many sincere and significant people in both the hemispheres that neither has had to exert to reach out to and realise that influence in their heart. It is there, rendered more comprehensible, more assimilable and more acceptable to all, both as a philosophy of life and a plan of conduct embracing all aspects of our daily existence. Influence can go no further.

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The future role of the Vedanta in a world which is witnessing the all-embracing, all-absorbing progress of science should be judged in the light of the teachings of the Swami, the Vedanta's greatest exponent and champion throughout the universe. Without him it would probably not have permeated in our lives the way it is doing now.

The Vedanta is the philosophy of the Vedas, the Indian scriptures which constitute the most ancient religious writings so far known to the world. The term covers not only the Vedas themselves, but the whole body of literature which explains, elaborates and comments upon their teaching. The value of these functions is all the more heightened when we realise that the Vedas were not written out at the time of composition. Nor were they supposed to have emanated from man i.e. they were called *apaurusheya* i.e. independent of man. They were revelations and were *shruti* i.e. the product of learning by hearing i.e. precept from the teacher.

The intrinsic value of the Vedanta springs from this nature of the Vedas. Paradoxical though it may seem this was at once a source of weakness and a cause of strength. Weakness, because of the possibility of numerous versions, often at variance with, and even contradictory to, each other. Strength, because these very variations permitted an elasticity of interpretations, an extensive area of integration.

No wonder the field of the Vedanta is as vast as diverse, the very vastness leading to diversity as well as unity, a unity of purpose, if not of thought, of approach to divinity.

Thus while there are countless sects among Hindus with different holy texts for each, the Vedanta supplies the philosophic basis for all. So long as

Hinduism lives—and it has already survived all possible vicissitudes—the Vedanta is bound to live. Even if Hindus do not survive, its Vedanta philosophy will survive in the world just as much as Buddhism subsists in India even now invisibly and yet inexorably though there are few visibly subscribing to it.

The essentials of the Vedanta may be briefly described in its three propositions. First, that man's real nature is divine. Secondly, the aim of life is to realise this divine nature. Thirdly, all religions are basically the same and lead to the same objective. The universal appeal and applicability of this philosophy is at once clear, provided it is preached properly and applied accordingly.

Not only as a common heritage of all Hindus, but more significantly as a common source of different forms of worship, the Vedanta fulfils these propositions most adequately. Separate cults based on the worship of Shiva or Vishnu do not signify any deviation from the teachings of the Vedanta. Disciples of different sects dissected the precepts but the preceptors themselves knew that the controversies ranging round Shiva or Vishnu did not find any place in the Upanishads. Shankara, the great exponent of the Vedanta, used the word *Narayana* to indicate the Supreme Being while others gave other names and some only spelt the mysterious syllable OM. But the ultimate objective and resultant attainment are the same. As it is explained in the *Gita*, the great repository of the Vedanta thoughts: "Even those who worship other gods with devotion moved by sincere faith actually worship Me."

If, as some people think, the Vedanta were to teach retirement or withdrawal from the worldly activities it would have had no future in a world of science. Matthew Arnold described the Hindu as one who lets "the legions thunder past, then plunges in thought again." This is however an erroneous impression which no doubt could be deduced from the political picture of India. The history of Vedantic thought however reveals an essentially different picture, a picture of incessant activity, ceaseless efforts at creating fresh avenues of thought and recreating known ones. The *Gita* refutes the picture of inaction. "One's normal duty should never be abandoned", says this Gospel and affirms that whatever is done or given or

eaten is all an offering to God. "Bearing a body on this earth, no one can completely abandon work." "Every man attains bliss by devotion to his particular works."

The above extracts from the *Gita* demonstrate amply the essence of the Vedantic thoughts. How closely the Swami's own thoughts, precepts and activities have approximated to and found their fountain head in them can now be very well realised. "We see," said he, "that the whole universe is working. For what? . . . For liberty; from the atom to the highest being working for the one end,—liberty for the mind, for the body, for the spirit . . . Work is inevitable . . . but we should work for the highest purpose."

Thus the teachings of the Vedanta—simplified and disengaged from diverse interpretations and difficult scriptural texts—are intrinsically suited for the modern man and the man of the future.

The modern world believes in material prosperity and will not rest content with voluntary exile for meditation or self-abnegation for the sake of self-effacement. A teaching that will ask him to lift up his head and not to prostrate himself is bound to attract him. The Vedanta is the bread of the strong. It says: "There are no weak. You are weak because you wish to be".⁴ The great exponent of universal Vedanta asserted to the world, "He who does not believe in himself is an atheist."

Now place this message before the modern man, the living man pulsating with the desire to live, to exist and to have his being in a world of live people on the march. He will immediately find his heart's echo in this message and without caring to know the source or age of this message will accept it as one befitting him. Let all spirited people who wish to march forward and all the despondents who are groping in despair equally turn to this idea and judge the effect for themselves. To use the expression of Gerald Heard it offers a "balanced philosophy and praxis of life which could provide sane and progressive living for a unified mankind."

Vivekananda's Vedanta does not believe in a God who will give man eternal bliss in heaven but cannot give him bread here. The elan vital, life force, which is at the source of the Vedanta, inevitably makes man a rational being intent on a scientific approach. A practical person bases his action

on knowledge and reason, and as the Swami said, "All knowledge is but a part of religion."⁵ He sets great store by the materialistic sciences also. According to him science and religion are both attempts to help man out of slavery. Even though religion is the more hoary process and is therefore considered more holy, he did not lay less stress on the natural sciences which deal with the truths of the physical world while religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world.

The Vedanta proceeds through the study of the mind, through metaphysics and logic. Science begins from external nature. "Searching through the mind we at last come to that Oneness, the Universal One, the Internal Soul of everything, the Essence, the Reality of everything . . . Through material science we come to the same Oneness . . ."

"Science is nothing but the finding of Unity. As soon as science would reach perfect unity, it would stop from further progress because it would reach the goal. Thus chemistry could not progress further, when it would discover one element out of which all others could be made. Physics would stop when it would be able to fulfil its services in discovering one energy of which all the others are but manifestations . . . and the science of religion become perfect when it would discover Him who is the one life in the universe of death . . . Religion can go no farther. This is the goal of all science."⁶

Sometimes adequate justice is not done to the fact of the universal applicability of the Vedantic thoughts by people who think that these are essentially alien to the West and describe them as constituting a recent message from the East. Many great intellectuals of the West and interpreters of the East however think that these form an integral part of their existence also, only that they are more often than not unaware of their presence amongst themselves. This very trend of thought should however be taken by us in the East as a proof of the presence of the Vedanta in the subconscious mind of the West.

That the Indian scriptures and sages have had these revealed to themselves from an earlier period and to a much greater extent has been a matter of great consolation with us in the midst of abject material degradation and moral stupor through the ages. That it remained for a son of India

to deliver anew that message for dynamic acceptance by the West and to forge an imperishable link between the East and the West is an augury for the salvation of both. It has given the former a new regeneration and the latter a fresh revelation. To illustrate this we may take only one example relating to the years before the Swami's emergence as a preacher of the Vedanta. America in particular had glimpses of this message of the Vedanta in the poems of Whitman who wrote a few years before the Swami's visit to the States:

"I am the enemy of repose and give
the others like for like"⁷

Or

"I take you specially to be mine,
your terrible rude forms.

(Mother bend down, bend close to me your face.)"⁸

Indeed, the Vedantic poet of America had prepared in advance the ground for the advent of the Vedantic philosopher of Asia.

"The past is also stored in thee . . .

Thou carriest great companions,

Venerable priestly Asia sails this day with thee."⁹

Thus the soil of the West, we find, is equally suitable for the seed of the Vedanta.

Yes, this seed, invisible and yet immanent—is the essence of all religions and the *summum bonum* of all science. How could one explain this more graphically than by quoting the following conversation from the *Chhandogya Upanishad*? Svetaketu asked his father how this vast universe with its multitudinous variety could be produced in this simple way.

"Fetch a fruit of that *nyagrodha* tree",¹⁰ said the father.

"Here is one, Sir," said Svetaketu.

"Break it and tell me what you see in it."

"I see some tiny seeds."

"Crush one of the tiny seeds."

"Yes, I have done it, Sir."

"What do you see therein?"

"Nothing," said Svetaketu.

"Yet in that subtle substance which was inside that little seed and which is hardly visible to the eye existed the power that produced all this big-branching *nyagrodha* tree. Do you wonder at it? Likewise all that exists in this universe was potentially in the *sat*, dear boy, and thou art That. Believe it."

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4. *Vide Practical Vedanta*, Part I.
5. *Complete Works*, Vol. VII.
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7. "Drum Taps".
8. "By Blue Ontario's Shore".
9. "Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood".
10. Indian Fig-tree.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION—HIS CONCEPTION OF THE SPIRITUAL REGENERATION OF HUMANITY

It has been said that those whom God loves die young. Many of us, ordinary mortals, have had this painful experience in our own circles of relations and friends. We find this true in connection with some of the greatest souls that have marked the progress of humanity. Christ and Sankara died in their early thirties. Shelley and Keats died before most men could think of being mature. The same could be said of the great Indian, Swami Vivekananda, whose birth centenary is sought to be celebrated in this Memorial Volume. It is impossible to write about Swami Vivekananda without going back to Sri Ramakrishna at whose feet Swami Vivekananda learned and whose message Swami Vivekananda spread. Some two thousand four hundred years ago Greece produced Socrates who did not write but whose life and message have been celebrated in the immortal *Dialogues of Plato*. Who could think of Socrates without Plato and of Plato without Socrates? The same analogy holds in the case of India in the nineteenth century. She saw the birth of a great mystic *sannyasi* in Sri Ramakrishna who lived as a *brahmachari* even in his married life, who had not read much but who had in himself a reservoir of great religious inspiration. He knew he had a new message for the world and he wanted a mouthpiece, and he found it in Swami Vivekananda. Hence it is not difficult to see that to appreciate Swami Vivekananda one has to go back to the personality and the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. It was a unique combination that both were indispensable to each other. Sri Ramakrishna was thought; Swami Vivekananda was the expression of that thought.

Sri Ramakrishna was a great religious genius. Hindus with their traditional belief in *Avatar* naturally came to look upon Sri Ramakrishna as an *Avatar*, as a God. Dr. A. C. Das represents this traditional tendency, but it is equally intelligible that the great European Romain Rolland with a different cultural inheritance looks upon Sri Ramakrishna as a man, as a great religious genius. Both views are intelligible and may be correct, but it

is immaterial whether Sri Ramakrishna is to be looked upon as a God or as a man. What is of importance is the life that he lived and the message that he had for humanity. Though a Hindu *pujari* he was broadminded enough to appreciate Christianity and Islam. He could experience in himself what it is to be a Christian or a Muslim as much as he knew what it was to be a Hindu. The result was a catholicity of outlook. He did not speak as a narrow bigot but as a unifier of religions. It became his mission to put an end to religious squabbles and enable all to recognise God as the all-pervading spirit in the whole universe. He did not want any Ramakrishna even. He did not want any argument, 'did not argue about doctrine and religion', he said, for 'all rivers flow into the ocean'. Unlike the traditional Hindu *sannyasin* who has turned his back on the world, seeking his salvation in a breach with all worldly connections, Sri Ramakrishna even as a *sannyasin* was conscious that he had something to teach the world. But he knew his own limitations and he was in search of a man through whom he could teach. He had the gift to see through man and when a sceptical college student Naren Dutt came to him, Sri Ramakrishna pierced through his scepticism. He vivified Naren Dutt with his touch so that the sceptical student ultimately came to recognise the voice of Ramakrishna as the voice of God. It was the mission of Sri Ramakrishna to rediscover the meaning of *Brahman* as a universal and ultimate Reality. He knew the joys of *Samadhi* as union with God, but he resisted the temptation to be lost in it. He cried out "Oh mother, let me remain in contact with man ; do not make me a dried up ascetic".

Years later, when Swami Vivekananda felt the lure of this joy and wanted to reach that joy, he was reprimanded by his Master: "For shame, how can you ask for such a thing? I thought you were a vast receptacle of life and here you wish to stay absorbed in personal joy like an ordinary man!"

To appreciate the mission of Sri Ramakrishna, one has to understand what Hinduism had become. There were the concrete *Upanishads* which taught the unity of *Brahman*. Learned Pandits talked about it, quoted Upanishadic passages, but they failed to realise the unity of *Brahman* in their own life. Hence developed caste with its water-tight compartments.

Hence developed untouchability, an expression of religious snobbery. Extreme emphasis came to be laid on ritualism and external purity. Man as man was forgotten. God came to be confined to the 'cooking pot', and Hinduism developed into 'a religion of the kitchen'. Needless to say it was an arduous task to overcome the conservatism of people, whose ideas had become fossilised, who had become impervious to any new ideas, but the genius of Sri Ramakrishna triumphed and Swami Vivekananda was able, to use an American expression, to sell his master's ideas and many Hindus came to realise that Hinduism was more than caste, was more than idol worship, was more than the mere conventional purity of the cooking pot and the kitchen. Slowly and dimly but steadily they came to realise the greatness of the new Hinduism which Sri Ramakrishna had preached.

Sri Ramakrishna had developed enough to see God even in prostitutes. Swami Vivekananda has placed on record that on one occasion, he saw Sri Ramakrishna standing before prostitutes and falling on the feet, bathed in tears, say, "Mother, in one form Thou art in the street, and in another form Thou art the universe. I salute Thee, Mother." Swami Vivekananda caught this inspiration and he re-interpreted Hinduism in terms of service which may be well called neo-Hinduism and neo-Vedantism. "May I be born and reborn again, and suffer a thousand miseries, if only I am able to worship the only God, in whom I believe, the sum-total of all souls, and above all my God the wicked, my God the afflicted, my God the poor of all nations."

The essence of Sri Ramakrishna's religion may be summarised in three leading ideas. First of all catholicity: he did not want a new religion, but he was conscious of the fact that each generation needs its prophets. Truth may be one but it is many-sided, and therefore cannot be exhausted by one person or one generation or one country. Sri Ramakrishna represents in his own personality the unity of all religions. He was free from spiritual pride and was capable of laughing benignly at others. He himself made no extravagant claim for himself.

Secondly, he came to emphasise activity, action. He said *Jiva is Shiva*, (all living beings are God). Who then dare think of showing mercy to them?

Not mercy but service, for man must be regarded as God. It was this ideal that made Swami Vivekananda embody this ideal in Sri Ramakrishna Mission as the mission of service.

The third idea was a sense of mission, that the message, that he had, should be passed on to others. Sri Ramakrishna had cried out once: "Come my children ; where are you? I cannot live without you." This is a strangely original attitude in India ; not that the idea was new but the idea had never been lived up to since the days of Buddha till the days of Sri Ramakrishna and Gandhiji.

Sri Ramakrishna passed away in 1886. Swami Vivekananda passed away in 1902. In the space of the sixteen years, it became Vivekananda's mission to spread the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, and he did it by establishing the Ramakrishna Mission on 1st May, 1897. The Mission has spread its three main ideals. First of all it resuscitates faith in Indian culture. Swami Vivekananda was conscious of the evils of caste and the rigour of the religion of the kitchen, but he was conscious of the fact that all this was inconsistent with the Vedantic teachings of the Upanishads. He wanted to revive the teachings of the Upanishads in pristine purity so that an Indian need not feel obsessed by the idea of western superiority and of western thoughts, but become conscious of the inherent greatness of his own inheritance. That is why Swami Vivekananda was anxious to go to America and Europe and preach there this new *Vedanta* of service. He had a magnificent personality, a magnificent voice, a magnificent command over English language and a magnificent mastery of the Indian classics, so that he could speak with authority and impressively. No wonder that he dominated the Parliament of all Religions at Chicago, and laid the foundation for *Vedanta* in America and Europe.

Today there are several centres of Ramakrishna Mission in New York, Chicago, Boston, to mention but a few, and some twenty years ago, an illustrious member of the Mission, Sri Siddheswarananda, founded a *Centre Vedantique* in Gretz near Paris. To a generation that had come to accept its inferiority to the west, the message of Swami Vivekananda came as a new inspiration, a new source of self-respect. It may rightly be claimed that the foundations for this were laid by Swami Vivekananda and Mrs. Annie

Besant, and this growing self-respect in the field of Indian culture paved the way for something bigger and deeper, self-respect in the field of politics which has ultimately led to the independence of India, the culmination of what was started by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in Calcutta, founded twentyfive years ago on 29th January, 1937. It has steadily grown till today. It is housed in a magnificent building in Gol Park, Calcutta which has cost nearly three-fourths of a *Crore* of Rupees. It seeks to serve the student community of Calcutta by affording them facilities for study. This has been achieved, but most important of all is its aspiration to function as an International Institute of Culture, where scholars from the East and West could meet and develop a study of all the different cultures of the world.

The second ideal of the Ramakrishna Mission was in the relief of human suffering. Sri Ramakrishna's mission has to its credit the establishment of three great hospitals, in Banaras, Calcutta and Rangoon. Several other Centres like Delhi and Madras have dispensaries to cater to the needs of visiting patients. The Ramakrishna Mission at Singapore has to its credit the establishment of an orphanage. But the third and the greatest work of the Mission has been in the field of education. Consciously or unconsciously there has been a certain imitation of the Society of Jesus in its emphasis on education. Numerous schools have been started and even colleges, and it is one of the ambitions of the Ramakrishna Mission, Belur, to evolve a full-fledged University there. The chief characteristic of all this education lies in the emphasis on the training of mind and character. In the general scheme of education in India, moral and religious education has found no important place, but they constitute the core of education in schools and colleges maintained by the Ramakrishna Mission, whether at the Headquarters in Belur, Calcutta, or in cities like Madras and Mysore in South India. They teach catholicity in outlook and activity in renunciation. The members of the Mission by their eagerness to learn and by their eagerness to serve have given ample proof of what sort the Mission is, and the students who have been reared in this atmosphere will never forget this lesson. That is why a student who has been educated in an institution founded and managed by the Ramakrishna Mission has a peculiar stamp

of his own, and that in itself is a wonderful achievement in a country where education is still backward.

Swami Vivekananda was an Indian nationalist among nationalists. But his contacts with the West had made him an internationalist. "No man, no nation can hate others and live", he said, "India's doom was sealed from the very day they invented the word *Mlechcha*" and stopped from communion with others. The spirit of Swami Vivekananda's message may be brought out by quoting some of his memorable assertions. He wanted Indians to be strong; he did not believe that real religion could flourish on empty stomachs. It would do Indians well to remember what he said: "Our young men must be strong; Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends, that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of *Gita*. You will understand *Gita* better with your biceps, your muscles a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krishna better with a little strong blood in you. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the *Atman* when your body stands firm on your feet and you feel yourselves as men."

Speaking of religion he said: "Temples and Churches, books and forms are simply the kindergartens of religion, to make the spiritual child strong enough to take the higher steps. Religion is not in doctrine or dogmas, nor in intellectual argumentation. It is being and becoming. It is realisation." Thus he brought out the weakness of conventional orthodox religion. He brought out this idea very picturesquely, when he adopted the simile of silk worms and said, "we make the thread out of our own substance and spin the cocoon and in course of time are imprisoned inside."

What did Swami Vivekananda teach? The question may well be put, what did he not teach? He taught us the elements of new India in every department of life. He knew how brave the Indians had become and he wanted Indians to be self-respecting. If one of our countrymen, he said, stands up and tries to become great, we all try to keep him down, but if a foreigner comes and tries to kick us, it is all right. That is why he wanted to create faith in our own selves. He was conscious of his own worth. He did not suffer from any false sense of modesty. He had the courage to say,

"I have a message for the world which I will deliver without fear and without care for the future. To the reformers I will point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root and branch reform." So confident of himself, he was not unwilling to learn from others: "We must be all right, ready to sit at the feet of all, for everyone can teach us great lessons." He wanted the new India to be a combination of the Brahman and the Kshatriya. He wanted *Bráhma-Teja* and *Kshatriya-Virya*. He wanted strong men, sincere, who could be backed up to develop. A hundred such and the world can be revolutionised. He had the love for the poor in his heart: "I am no metaphysician, philosopher, nay, no Saint. But I am poor, I live poor." He looked upon the neglect of the masses as a great national sin. He had no faith in 'don't-touchism.' "Do you think", he asked, "there is any religious life in India? The paths of knowledge, devotion and *yoga* all have gone and there remains only the don't-touchism"; and he goes on to say, "nowadays *Brahman* is neither in the recesses of the heart nor in the higher heaven nor in all beings. Now he is in the cooking pot." He believed in prayer, but he did not believe in it as a substitute for good life. On the contrary he believed in it as an incentive to good life. It created an atmosphere of peace and reverence and love, and this is what we find in a Rámakrishna Mission Centre, and in institutions maintained by that Centre.

Swami Vivekananda was at best nothing but the mouthpiece of Ramakrishna. But he was averse to making a fetish of Ramakrishna. He knew how easy it was to preach about Ramakrishna. But he also knew how much easier it was to misinterpret Ramakrishna. That is why in an angry mood he said, "Hands off, who cares for your Ramakrishna, who cares for your *Bhakti* or *Mukti*, who cares what your scriptures say. I will go into a thousand hells cheerfully if I can rouse my countrymen immersed in *tamas* to stand on their own feet." He inspired men with a spirit of *karma yoga*. He was prepared to be a servant of anyone who serves and helps others without caring for his own *Bhakti* or *Mukti*. Life of monks and nuns has an element of greatness in it, but it is not without its dangers. Ideals may be high but the flesh is weak and many have fallen from their lofty pedestal before the demands of flesh. That was the cause which undid Buddha's

work in his Sanghas ; that was what undid a good deal of Roman Catholicism in the middle ages. But it has to be said to the credit of the members of Ramakrishna Mission that so far they have preserved the purity of their life. No breath of scandal has sought to throw mud on them. In fact every one of them has been so lost in the daily routine of orderly life and a life of service that they have still kept the name of Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda pure and undefiled, and so long as that spirit works, the theme of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda will live pure and undefiled. India has every reason to be proud of these two great prophets without sinking into false idolatry, without sinking into a false exaltation of the past. They have the courage to tell India and their countrymen where Hinduism had gone wrong and how it could be taken back to the pure fountains of Vedic life and teachings. That is the message that they have and India is stronger for it. Spiritually and politically the India of today is free. It is for us to make maximum use of the new opportunities that have come in our way and so have come into being neo-Hinduism and neo-Vedantism.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S NEO-VEDANTISM AND ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION

By the Neo-Vedantism of Swami Vivekananda is meant the new *Vedanta* as distinguished from the old traditional *Vedanta* developed by Sankaracarya. Sankara's *Vedanta* is known as *Advaita* or non-dualism, pure and simple. So it is sometimes called *kevala-advaita* or unqualified monism. It may also be called abstract monism in so far as *Brahman*, the ultimate reality, is, according to it, devoid of all qualities and distinctions (*nirguna* and *nirvisesa*). The neo-Vedanta is also *advaita* inasmuch as it holds that *Brahman*, the ultimate reality, is one without a second (*ekamevadvitiam*)*. But as distinguished from the traditional *Advaita* of Sankara, it is a synthetic *Vedanta* which reconciles *dvaita* or dualism and *advaita* or non-dualism and also other theories of reality. So also it may be called concrete monism in so far as it holds that *Brahman* is both qualified and qualityless (*saguna* and *nirguna*), it has forms and is also formless (*sakara* and *nirakara*).

The germs of Neo-Vedantism as also the rationale and beginning of its practical application are to be found in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. It was left to Swami Vivekananda to develop them into the philosophy of Neo-Vedantism and lay the foundation of practical *Vedanta*. Of course, we do not deny that the fundamental principles on which Neo-Vedantism and its practical application rest may be traced to the Vedas and the Upanishads. But it was Sri Ramakrishna who demonstrated and synthesised them through his manifold spiritual experience. He also gave them so simple, direct and unfaltering expression as to dispel all doubts and misgivings from the minds of the modern rationalists and unbending unbelievers, even Swami Vivekananda (then Narendranath Datta) not excepted. We are to consider what these fundamental principles of Neo-Vedantism and its application, as taught by Sri Ramakrishna, are and how Swami Vivekananda developed them into a philosophy of practical *Vedanta*. But in order to bring out its distinctive features, we have first to

* एकमेवाद्वितीयम्।

state briefly the main positions of *Advaita Vedanta* as developed by Sankaracarya.

For Sankara, *Brahman* is, from the highest or transcendental standpoint of knowledge (*paramarthikadrsti*), the ultimate reality and the only reality. It is a non-dual reality which has no qualities and is devoid of all distinctions, external as well as internal. There is no other thing or reality within or outside it. It may be described as conscious, real and infinite (*satyam, jnanam, anantam*), as existence, consciousness and bliss (*sat, cit, ananda*). But *Brahman*, in the absolutely transcendent aspect, cannot be described at all and it is, therefore, called indeterminate or characterless (*nirguna*). The description of *Brahman* even as infinite, real, consciousness, or as real, conscious, bliss, though more accurate than accidental descriptions cannot directly convey the reality of *Brahman*. It only serves to direct the mind towards *Brahman* by denying It of finiteness, unreality, unconsciousness and blisslessness. So, strictly speaking, an accurate description of *Brahman* must be negative, i.e. by way of saying that 'It is not this, not this' (*neti neti*), or of dissociating it from all qualities and characters.

Sankara, however, admits that from the lower standpoint of our practical life and experience, *Brahman* may be described as the cause, the creator, the sustainer, the destroyer of the world and, therefore, also as an omnipotent and omniscient Being. He then appears as possessed of all these qualities (*saguna*). *Brahman* in this aspect is called *saguna Brahma* or *Ivara* in Sankara's philosophy. He is the object of worship.

But, for Sankara, the world is an illusory appearance projected by *Brahman* through His power of *maya*. *Maya* as a power of *Brahman* is indistinguishable from Him, just as the burning power of fire is from the fire itself. It is the magical power of *Brahman* to conjure up the world-show with all its wonderful objects. Just as a magician by the exercise of his magical powers makes one coin appear as many and produces the illusion of many coins in the minds of ignorant people, so God by His *maya* produces the illusory appearance of a world of many objects and we in our ignorance see many objects where there is really none. For God, *maya* is only the power to create the appearance of a world of objects. It does

not affect God, does not deceive Him, just as the magician is not deceived by his magical show. For ignorant people like us who are deceived by *maya* and see the many objects here instead of one *Brahman*, it is an illusion-producing ignorance. In this aspect *maya* is, therefore, also called *avidya* or *ajnana* or ignorance. But, for those wise few, who are not deceived by the world-show, but perceive in it nothing but *Brahman*, there is no illusion, nor, therefore, illusion-producing *maya*. *Brahman* to them is not, therefore, the wielder of *maya* at all. Hence the description of *Brahman* as creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world, as omnipotent and omniscient does not give us Its essence (*swarupa-laksana*) ; it is the description of what is merely accidental (*tatasthalaksana*) and does not touch Its essential nature.

According to Sankara, the world is a false appearance (*mithya*) projected by *maya* on the one hand, and perceived by us on the other, on account of our ignorance. This ignorance is a positive principle (*bhava-rupa*) in so far as it conceals the reality of *Brahman* from our view (*avarana*) and constructs, instead, the appearance of a world of many objects (*viksepa*). Hence the world has no place in *Brahman*, the absolute Reality ; it is not a *part*, *aspect* or *manifestation* of *Brahman*, though it apparently exists in and is sustained by *Brahman*. It does not exist anywhere except in *Brahman*—not, however, as a quality, adjective, or appearance of It, but only as a false appearance *in* It. The relation between *Brahman* and the world is neither positive nor negative, but only apparent and, therefore, strictly speaking, no relation at all. The world has, of course, an empirical existence in so far as it is perceived by us. It has also an objective existence inasmuch as it exists out there and is not like a fiction or subjective fancy of our mind, although it cannot be called real in the same sense in which the eternal and uncontradictable *Brahman* is real. While all this is *Brahman* and *Brahman* is present everywhere in the world, we in our ignorance fail to see It and, on the basis of It and by the use of names and forms (*nama-rupa*), construct, instead, a world of many material things, bodies and minds, which exists as a matter of fact and is perceived by us. Therefore it cannot be called unreal in the sense of being mere negation or nothing or void. At the same time, being impermanent and contradicted and des-

troyed, or at least contradictable and destructible, it is rejected by *Brahman* and so cannot be called real either. Strictly speaking, the world never exists in *Brahman* and will never exist. Such is the metaphysical status of the world in Sankara's *Advaita philosophy*.

Coming to the soul (*jiva*), Sankara says that it is identical with *Brahman*. Man is apparently composed of the body and the soul. But the body which we perceive is, like every other material object, merely an illusory appearance. When this is realised, the reality that remains is the soul which is nothing other than *Brahman*. The Upanishadic saying 'That thou art' (*tat-tvam-asi*),* means that there is an unqualified identity between the soul, that underlies the apparently finite and individual man, and *Brahman*, the absolute. Of course, if we take the word 'thou' in the sense of the empirical individual limited and conditioned by the body, and the word 'that' as the reality beyond the world, there cannot be an identity between the 'thou' and 'that'. We have to understand, therefore, the word 'thou' to imply pure consciousness underlying man and 'that' to imply also pure consciousness which forms the essence of *Brahman*. Between these two, complete identity exists and is taught by the Upanishads. Being identical with *Brahman*, the soul is in reality what *Brahman* also really is. It is the supreme *Brahman*—the self-luminous, infinite, consciousness.

The soul appears as the limited, finite self because of its association and identification with the body, gross and subtle, which is a product of ignorance. When through the influence of beginningless ignorance, this happens, the soul is in bondage. In this state it forgets that it is really *Brahman*. It behaves like a finite, limited, miserable being which runs after transitory worldly objects and is pleased to get them, and sorry to lose them. It identifies itself with a finite body and mind and thinks of itself as the 'Ego' or 'I'. This limited ego opposes itself to the rest of existence. But in reality the self is neither the body nor the mind nor the ego. These are only apparent limitations of the real self and the causes of all conflicts of interests between man and man.

The study of dreamless sleep gives us a glimpse of what the self really is when dissociated from its feeling of identity with the body. The soul

* तत्त्वमसि।

in its intrinsic state is not a finite, miserable being. It does not separate itself from the rest of existence and does not limit itself by a feeling of the 'I' (*aham*) opposed to a 'thou' or 'this' or 'that'. It is also free from all worries that arise from hankerings after objects. The self, really, then is unlimited consciousness and bliss. But the fact that the blissful state of dreamless sleep is not permanent and man once more returns to his finite, limited, embodied consciousness on waking up, shows that there remain even in dreamless sleep, in a latent form, the forces of *karma* or *avidya* which draw man into the world. Unless these forces of *avidya* or ignorance, accumulated from the past, can be completely stopped, there is no liberation from bondage to the body and the world and also from the miserable existence which the self has in the world.

As ignorance about the real nature of the self is the root-cause of bondage, liberation is to be attained through knowledge of the self as identical with *Brahman*. What is necessary for this knowledge is the study of the *Vedanta* and reflection and meditation on the truths learnt from it, till there is a clear realisation of the truth that the self is *Brahman* (*tat-tvam-asi*) in the form 'I am *Brahman*'. The performance of religious works like rituals or devotion to and worship of God cannot lead to liberation, for they presuppose the reality of the many—the worshipper, the worshipped and the offerings etc. Hence instead of destroying ignorance and the illusion of the world, they would bind us more to the world. Of course, religious works purify the mind and generate in us the desire to know *Brahman*. But after that, ignorance can be removed and liberation attained only through knowledge of the self or of *Brahman*. The liberated soul may continue to live in the body for some time on account of the *karmas* that have already begun to bear fruits (*prarabdha-karma*). But the liberated soul does never again identify itself with the body. The world still appears before him, but he is not deceived by it. He is, therefore, not affected by the world's misery. He is in the world and yet out of it. The man who has in this life attained to this state is called the "living free" (*jivanmukta*). But liberation is not the production of anything new. It is only a clear and steady recognition of what is always there, namely the identity of the self and *Brahman*. Liberation is not merely the absence of misery which arises from the false

sense of distinction between the self and *Brahman*. On the other hand, it is a state of positive bliss (*ananda*), because *Brahman* is bliss and liberation is identity with *Brahman*.

So much for the *Advaita* of Sankara. Now we are to consider some important points in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, which laid the foundation on which the superstructure of Swami Vivekananda's Neo-Vedantism with its practical aspects was raised. We shall see that the main outline of this new *Vedanta* was drawn by Sri Ramakrishna and it was Swami Vivekananda who filled it in with elaborate reasoning so as to work up a philosophy proper. It has been very aptly said that Swami Vivekananda is a commentary on Sri Ramakrishna. But the commentator with his giant intellect and profound understanding made such distinctive contributions that his commentary becomes itself a philosophy, just as Sankara's commentary on the *Vedanta-Sutra* is by itself a philosophy.

Sri Ramakrishna lived a life of manifold spiritual realisation. He approached Reality along numerous paths and had very varied experiences of it. He found that though these experiences differ in their specific forms and characters, yet they all relate to the same Real and reveal only different forms and aspects of it. These experiences being equally direct and genuine, he was convinced that Reality has many aspects, forms and characters, and also that in one aspect it is formless and characterless. This is a sort of experimental verification of the truth contained in a Rig-Vedic verse which declares: "The one reality is called by the wise in different ways . . ." (*ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti** . . .). On the strength of his various spiritual experiences and realisations, Sri Ramakrishna taught many truths for the good of the world. He lived in an age in which the world was torn by conflicts of creeds and doctrines, theologies and philosophies, and the relation between any two religious sects or communities was embittered by intolerance, jealousy and contempt of each other. It was a mission of his life to end these conflicts and bring about reconciliation. Of his many teachings we take note of the following as relevant to our present subject—Neo-Vedantism and its Practical Application.

First, Sri Ramakrishna teaches that *Brahman* and *Shakti* or *Kali* are not

* एकम् सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।

two different realities unrelated to each other, nor are they different realities or existences inseparably related to each other as substance and quality. They are only two aspects of the same reality or two states of the same thing and, therefore, non-different (*abheda*). Just as the same water of the sea is sometimes moving and sometimes motionless, or the same serpent sometimes crawls and sometimes remains coiled up and motionless, so the same reality is called *Kali* or *Brahman* according as it does or does not create, maintain and destroy the world. This implies that *Brahman* or the Absolute in one aspect is indeterminate and impersonal Being (*nirguna*) as the Advaitin holds, and in another, is determinate and personal God (*saguna*) as the Visistadvaitin and Dvaitin affirm. It implies also that the Personal God is not an illusory appearance or a lower form of *Brahman*, the Absolute, which is really indeterminate and qualityless, but only appears as determinate and qualified when associated with *maya* or covered by *avidya* or ignorance.

Secondly, Sri Ramakrishna teaches that it is the same reality that is the nameless and formless *Brahman* for the *jnani* or the man of philosophic insight, the *atman* or pure self for the *yogi* or the man absorbed in meditation, and *Bhagavana* or Personal God for the *bhakta* or the man of devotion. Just as the same water of the ocean is congealed into the form of ice by extreme cold and is dissolved into formless water by the heat of the sun, so reality takes on form and shape for the devotee but is formless for the *jnani* and the *yogi*. This means that the absolute reality may be formless or it may have forms, so that the worship of the forms of God has not less value and validity than the worship of the formless *Brahman*. Sri Ramakrishna often used to illustrate the truth that God may be formless and yet may have forms by the story of the chameleon which wears different colours at different times and sometimes has no colour at all.

Thirdly, Sri Ramakrishna sometimes speaks of the seven psychic centres from the *muladhara* to *sahasrara* in the human body and the seven levels of consciousness connected with them. Here he teaches that when the mind rises to the sixth level, we have the experience of the forms of God, but when it comes up to the seventh level, it is absorbed in *samadhi* and perceives no form, no object at all. It is a state of pure consciousness in which

Brahman as existence-consciousness-bliss (*sat-cit-ananda*) is completely unified with *Shakti* or the divine power and nothing physical or mental exists. This implies that we get different revelations of reality from different levels of experience and that at the highest level there is a dissolution of the whole world of objects in one universal consciousness.

But then he teaches that it is this universal consciousness that has become all this, it is *Brahman* that has become the twenty-four principles from *prakriti* down to the physical elements. Just as we leave behind us all the steps of a stair in order to mount the roof of a building and, on reaching it, find that the stair is built of just the same material as the roof is made of, so we realise *Brahman* by following the negative path of withdrawal from the world (*neti neti*), but on realisation find that *Brahman* is present everywhere in the world. So the negation of the world is followed by its affirmation in a new light in the life of the *vijnani* or the perfectly wise saint, if not in that of the *Jnani* or the just-wise man. This is Sri Ramakrishna's fine way of illustrating spiritual truths that baffle all attempts at a logical explanation.

Now we are to say something about the living character and burning intensity of Sri Ramakrishna's realisation of the truth that all this is *Brahman*. This will also give us a glimpse of the practical application of *Vedanta* in the life and conduct of Sri Ramakrishna. For him, it is *Brahman* as the Divine Mother that has become everything of the world. We have his own words when we say that for him the earth and the heaven, the sun and the moon, the temple and the garden, the jar and the pot, the bed and the bedstand, man and woman, the young and the old, birds and beasts, in a word, all are verily so many forms and manifestations of the Divine Mother, all are *Brahman* and beam with the effulgence of the Divine *cit* or consciousness. He would see the cat as a form of his Divine Mother and give it the offerings to Mother Kali to eat, although that was against the conventional rules of sanctity that attaches to such things and was, therefore, reported against by the care-taker of the temple of Goddess Kali. Sri Ramakrishna felt the presence of God even in the blades of grass and at times could not tread upon them and would be pained if they were trodden upon by others. The oneness of all existence was a living experience

for him so much so that his body bore the marks of a slap given to a man in a boat on the river Ganges, quite at a distance from him. He realised the presence of God in the poor as much as in the rich and so taught that we are not to be *kind* to the poor, but *serve* the God that is in them or the God that they *are*, with due reverence. Such was the unique realisation of Sri Ramakrishna that 'all this is *Brahman*' (*sarvam khalvidam Brahman*).^{*} It is not, as the Sankarite would say, that there is no all but only *Brahman*. For Sri Ramakrishna, all *are* and are *Brahman* in different forms. Swami Vivekananda had before him a living model, as it were, of a new type of *Vedanta*. The Swami lived long enough in his inspiring presence and understood him well enough to be in a position to build up the superstructure of Neo-Vedantism with its practical application. Let us see how he built it.

For Swami Vivekananda, *Brahman* as Infinite Existence, Infinite Knowledge and Infinite Bliss (*sat-cit-ananda*) is the ultimate reality and the only reality. These are the only attributes we can ascribe to *Brahman*, and they are one. It is nothing more. It is without a name, without a form or stain. It is beyond space, time and causation. It is one without a second. It is all in all, none else exists. "There is neither nature, nor God, nor the universe, only that One Infinite Existence, out of which, through name and form, all these are manufactured".¹ All this universe is the reflection of that One Eternal Being on the screen of *Maya*—the triad of space, time and causation. These are only ideas or concepts of our mind, and have no place in *Brahman*. The world is the creation of name and form, of *Maya*. The waves of the sea are not really different from the sea. What make them appear as different are only name and form: the form of the wave, and the name which we give to it, "wave". When name and form go, the waves are the same sea. We are looking upon the One Existence in different forms and under different names, and creating all these images of objects upon it. "All these heavens, all these earths and all these places are vain imaginations of the mind. They do not exist, never existed in the past, and never will exist in the future".² "This world is but a dream, and this dream will vanish when one wakes up and becomes free from *maya*".³ "There is but One. In Him is *Maya*, dreaming all this dream".⁴

* सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म ।

What we have said above will suggest that for Swami Vivekananda, *Brahman* is an indeterminate, impersonal Being without qualities and distinctions, without any relation to any object or the world of objects. This means that Swami Vivekananda's *Brahman* is perfectly formless, qualityless and distinctionless (*nirguna* and *nirvisesa*) like Sankara's, and that there is no difference between them on this point. But, as we shall presently see, this will not be a correct and complete estimation of Swami Vivekananda's conception of *Brahman*.

In Swami Vivekananda's Vedantic thought there are two movements, a negative and a positive. The description of *Brahman* we have given above is the result of the negative movement of his thought. It is the traditional approach to *Brahman* by the path of negation (*neti neti*). But as complementary to the negative path, he follows also a positive path and reaffirms all that was at first negated, in a new light and with a new meaning. To understand *Brahman*, he says, "we have to go through the negation ; and then the positive side will begin. We have to give up ignorance and all that is false ; and then truth will begin to reveal itself to us. When we have grasped the truth, things which we gave up at first will take new shape and form, will appear to us in a new light, and become deified. They will have become sublimated, and then we shall understand them in their true light. But to understand them, we have first to get a glimpse of truth ; we must give them up at first, and then we get them back again deified".⁵ So we may say that, according to Swami Vivekananda, the world of objects is not totally negated in *Brahman*. It is not, as in Sankara's *Advaita* it is, that *Brahman* alone is real and the world is false or illusory (*brahma satyam, jaganmithya*),* but that in a sense the world also is real.

According to Swami Vivekananda, the *Vedanta* does not in reality denounce the world. What it seeks to teach is the deification of the world and not its annihilation. It does not give us a suicidal advice to kill ourselves and annihilate the world. What is really intended by it is the deification of the world—giving up the world as we ordinarily think of it, as it appears to us—and to know what it really is. The Swami says: "Deify it (the world); it is God alone" ; and he cites the opening verse of the *Isopanisad*

* ब्रह्म सत्यम् जगन्मिथ्या ।

which says: "Whatever exists in this universe, is to be covered with the Lord". He goes on further and says: "You can have your wife ; it does not mean that you are to abandon her, but that you are to see God in the wife". So also, you are 'to see God in your children. So in everything. In life and in death, in happiness and in misery, the Lord is equally present. The whole world is full of the Lord. Open your eyes and see Him. This is what *Vedanta* teaches'.⁶

As further evidence of Swami Vivekananda's affirmation of the world in God, we may consider what he says with regard to the way and the attitude with which we are to work in the world. This, he says, is the Vedantic way and the Vedantic attitude. We are to work by giving up, i.e. giving up the apparent, illusive world. This means that we are to work by seeing God everywhere. "Desire to live a hundred years", he says, "have all earthly desires, if you wish, only deify them, convert them into heaven. . . . Thus working, you will find the way out. There is no other way. If a man plunges headlong into foolish luxuries of the world without knowing the truth, he has missed his footing, he cannot reach the goal. And if a man curses the world, goes into a forest, mortifies his flesh, and kills himself little by little by starvation, makes his heart a barren waste, kills out all feeling, and becomes harsh, stern, and dried up, that man also has missed the way. These are the two extremes, the two mistakes at either end. Both have lost the way, both have missed the goal".⁷ All this may be summed up in one single and simple utterance of Sri Ramakrishna: 'Do whatever you like with the knowledge of the non-dual *Brahman* tied up in a corner of your cloth' (i.e. in your possession).

Now we may consider Swami Vivekananda's affirmation of the world from the side of *Brahman*. 'This Absolute', he says, 'has become the universe by coming through space, time and causation. Time, space and causation are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen ; and when It is seen on the lower side. It *appears* as the universe'.⁸ (*italics mine*). It will be seen here that there is neither time, space, nor causation in the Absolute and that It is beyond them all. They have no real existence, yet they are not non-existent, since it is through them that all things are manifesting as this universe. Further, they sometimes vanish. Take, for example, a wave

on the ocean. 'The wave is the same as the ocean, and yet we know it is a wave, and as such different from the ocean. What make it different from the ocean are its name and form. If the wave subsides, the form vanishes in a moment, and yet the form was *not a delusion*. So long as the wave existed the form was there, and you were bound to see the form. This is *Maya*' (italics mine). So also the Swami tells us elsewhere that 'Absolute is *manifesting* Itself as many, through the veil of time, space and causation'¹⁰ (italics mine). But further on he quotes with approval an Upanishadic passage which says: "As the one fire entering into the universe expresses itself in various forms, even so that One Soul is *expressing* Itself in every soul and yet is infinitely more besides"¹¹ (italics mine). So far the Swami seems to waver between two different conceptions of *Brahman* or the Absolute as apparently manifested in the universe and as really expressed in it. It seems he could not go the whole length with his Master Sri Ramakrishna and say that all this is verily *Brahman*.

But it would appear from what the Swami says in other places that he also holds that all this is verily *Brahman*. Thus he says: "As rain falling upon a mountain flows in various streams down the sides of the mountain, so all the energies which you see here are from that one Unit". Further he quotes some passages from the Upanishads which say: "He is in all that moves ; He is in all that is pure. He fills the Universe ; . . . that one Soul of the Universe is manifesting Himself in all these various forms. As air coming into this universe manifests itself in various forms, even so, the One Soul of all souls, of all beings, is manifesting Himself in all forms".¹² The same idea is expressed by Swami Vivekananda with greater force and clarity in some other passages. He says: "We now see that all the various forms of cosmic energy, such as matter, thought, force, intelligence, and so forth, are *simply* the manifestations of that cosmic intelligence, or, . . . the Supreme Lord. Everything that you see, feel, or hear, the whole universe, is His creation ; or to be a little more accurate, is His projection ; or to be still more accurate, is the Lord Himself"¹³ (italics mine).

Now if we consider Swami Vivekananda's view of the relation between substance and quality, noumenon and phenomenon, we shall get further

evidence in support of our contention that for him the Universe is a real manifestation of the Absolute in various forms. By substance we mean the unchanging ground and support of changing qualities. So also by noumenon we mean the immutable reality (i.e. the Absolute) underlying the world of mutation and change (i.e. the world of changing objects) which is called phenomenon. Now Swami Vivekananda holds that 'we cannot think of the substance as separate from the qualities ; we cannot think of change and not-change at the same time ; it would be impossible. But the very thing which is the substance is the quality ; substance and quality are not two things. It is the unchangeable that is appearing as the changeable. The unchangeable substance of the universe (the Absolute) is not something separate from it. The noumenon is not something different from the phenomena, but *it is the very noumenon (the Absolute) which has become the phenomena (the sensible universe)*',¹⁴ (italics mine).

These are important statements made by Swami Vivekananda. And here he practically gives a philosophical exposition of Sri Ramakrishna's teaching that *Brahman* and *Shakti* are non-different (*abheda*). What Swami Vivekananda calls the unchangeable substance of the universe or the noumenon is the same as *Brahman*, and what he calls the qualities or the phenomena are just the contents of the universe as a play of energies, powers and forces, in a word, of *Shakti*. The *Shakti* is sometimes called *Mahamaya* as the manifest universe of space, time and causation. So we may say that for Swami Vivekananda the universe as such is really a manifestation of *Brahman*. Still, the fact remains that at times his thought switches off to the other pole from which he says that the universe is an apparent manifestation of *Brahman*, its reflection on space, time and causation which make up *Maya*, that it is an illusion, a dream and so on. We have to find some way of reconciling such conflicting statements made by the great Swami. This way has been suggested by Swamiji himself and taught by his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. We shall consider it in connection with Swami Vivekananda's reconciliation of *Advaita*, *Dvaita* and other forms of religion.

Like Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda holds that *Advaita* and *Dvaita* and *Visistadvaita* are all true and that the descriptions of *Brahman*

given by them relate to the same reality. In *Advaita*, *Brahman* has no quality, no form (*nirguna*). It is indeterminate and impersonal. It is neither a creator nor sustainer, nor destroyer of the world, neither omnipotent nor omniscient, neither gracious nor merciful. But for *Dvaita* and *Visistadvaita*, *Brahman* has all good qualities. He has also forms (*saguna*). He is a Personal Being and is the omnipotent and omniscient creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world.

So also there are different conceptions of the world and of the soul and its liberation in *Advaita*, *Visistadvaita* and *Dvaita*. For *Advaita*, the world is the product of *maya*, an illusory creation of God's magical power. The individual self as a limited person is also unreal. But the real self of man, the *Atman* in him is ever pure, free, infinite and immortal ; it is the same *sat-cit-ananda* that *Brahman* is, and as such, it is *Brahman* itself. Its false association with the body through ignorance is the cause of its bondage. Therefore, liberation is to be attained only through knowledge of the soul as identical with *Brahman*, and not through religious work (*karma*), nor through devotion to God (*bhakti*). But, according to *Dvaita* and *Visistadvaita*, the world is a real creation of *Brahman* by His wonderful, but real creative power. The world is, therefore, as real as *Brahman*. The individual soul, according to *Dvaita* and *Visistadvaita*, is a limited, finite being, though it is essentially conscious and eternal. It is not identical with, but different from *Brahman*, and is completely *dependent* on Him. When through ignorance it identifies itself with the body and forgets God, it comes under bondage. Liberation from bondage cannot be attained through mere knowledge of God, self and the world. We must, of course, have true knowledge about them. But after we have the requisite knowledge, we must constantly remember God and love and worship Him. It is through such steadfast devotion to God (*karma* and *bhakti*) that man receives God's grace ; and it is God's grace that liberates man from bondage. So it is *bhakti* or devotion, combined with *jnana* and *karma* (knowledge and work), that leads to liberation.

Now let us see how in the Neo-Vedantism of Swami Vivekananda there is a reconciliation of *Advaita*, *Dvaita* and *Visistadvaita*. According to him, God is Personal and Impersonal at the same time. Even man may be said

to be both personal and impersonal. Man as soul or spirit is infinite and impersonal ; but as living in a body or as embodied, he is a finite person. "The Impersonal", he says, "is a living God, a principle. The difference between personal and impersonal is this, that the personal is only a man, and the impersonal idea is that He is the angel, the man, the animal, and yet something more, because Impersonality includes all personalities, is the sum total of everything in the universe and infinitely more besides".¹⁵ So his *Advaita* is friendly and not antagonistic to *Dvaita* and *Visistadvaita*. These are accepted by him 'not in a patronising way, but with the conviction that they are true, manifestations of the same truth, and that they all lead to the same conclusions as the *Advaita* has reached'.¹⁶ The Swami goes further and says that sometimes we may have even contradictory ideas, and yet they may all belong to the same great universal truth. Thus if a man journeying towards the sun takes a photograph of the sun at every stage of his journey, then it will be found that not two of the photographs are alike, and yet we cannot deny that they are all photographs of the same sun and equally correct pictures of it. Similarly, *Advaita*, *Dvaita*, *Visistadvaita* and other types of philosophy and religion give different descriptions of Reality or the Absolute from different points of view. But they are all descriptions of the same Reality and are equally true as far as they go. Swami Vivekananda also tells us that there are various grades and types of human minds who require different types of philosophy and religion. Hence any philosophy or religion must comprehend all other types, if it is to satisfy and serve the needs of the various grades of human minds. Such a philosophy or religion is the Neo-Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda.

It is to be observed here that a reconciliation of *Advaita*, *Dvaita* and other systems as made by Swami Vivekananda, rests on the recognition of different standpoints of knowledge and levels of human experience. From the different standpoints and levels we may have different views of the same thing, e.g. the water of the ocean appears as blue when seen from a distance, but it has no colour when held in the palm of the hand. Now all the views that we get of any thing from different standpoints should be synthesized, if we are to get a full view of the thing. These different views may sometimes be contrary and even contradictory. But

we cannot reject any of them as false, since they are all based on genuine human experience. The Advaitin's view of *Brahman* seems to be based on *nirvikalpa samadhi* in which there is only pure consciousness, but no particular form of consciousness, related to any particular object. In *nirvikalpa jnana* there is a negation of all objects and even of the subject of consciousness, and what remains is pure consciousness which simply *is* or *exists* and *is*, therefore, identical with pure existence. Hence on the basis of *nirvikalpa jnana* we are to say that Reality or *Brahman* is impersonal existence-consciousness which is also peace or bliss, and that there is no world of objects, no other reality. The Dvaitin's view of Reality, on the other hand, is based on *savikalpa samadhi* in which the meditative consciousness takes the form of a subject as different from, but related to, the object of meditation. In *savikalpa jnana* there is an affirmation of both the subject and the object as related to each other. So, on the basis of *savikalpa jnana* we are to say that Reality or *Brahman* is a subject related to a real world of objects, that it is a personal being, the real creator of a real world of finite things and beings. Both of these views of *Brahman* being based on genuine spiritual experience, should be accepted as true of *Brahman*, the ultimate Reality. Now there may be an alternation between these views in the life and teachings of some spiritual personages who sincerely believe in both. They may alternately pass from the one to the other and express themselves in the language of either, according to the needs and capacities of those whom they teach. That is to say, they may sometimes speak the language of *Advaita* and sometimes that of *Dvaita*, and we may be bewildered by the apparent inconsistencies between their different statements. This is probably the explanation of the apparent contradictions that one may find in the statements of Swami Vivekananda at different times and in different places. But these may be reconciled in the light of what we have said here.

Now coming to the different paths to liberation we see that Swami Vivekananda reconciles them all in his Neo-Vedanta. The main principle of this reconciliation is given by him in his conception of *Brahman*. "The Vedantist", he says, "gives no other attributes to God except these three—that He is Infinite Existence, Infinite Knowledge, and Infinite Bliss, and

he regards these three as One. Existence without knowledge and love, cannot be ; knowledge without love, and love without knowledge cannot be. What we want is the harmony of Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss Infinite".¹⁷ So also instead of mere knowledge (*jnana*), or mere love (*bhakti*), or mere work (*karma*), he would fain combine them all in the ideal life and the ideal spiritual path. He wants harmony, not one-sided development ; and he thinks that it is possible to have the intellect of a Sankara with the heart of a Buddha. For him, love is a universal principle, the only moving principle in the universe. 'The motive power of the whole universe', he says, 'is that one wonderful thing, unselfishness, renunciation, love, the real, the only living force in existence'.¹⁸

We must recognise the value of all the paths to the goal of liberation. We should not confine ourselves to any one of them and ignore the rest, for they all touch the fibres of our being and appeal to our nature as spiritual beings. We cannot do away with any one of them. Knowledge we want, because we have reason and that must be satisfied. Work we want too, because we have the will and energy for it in us, and these must have their proper outlet and proper use. Love of God and man is no less necessary than knowledge or work for the satisfaction of the heart in us, of our life of feeling and emotion. We have a heart as truly as we have the head or the brain, and both must be satisfied. Sankara could not deny the claims of the heart in his practical life, though he would not recognise them in his philosophical theory. Nor could Buddha avoid all metaphysical discussion and knowledge in spite of his all-absorbing interest in the practical problem of life—the problem how to end misery.

Swami Vivekananda in his Neo-Vedanta combines *jnana*, *karma*, *bhakti* and *yoga*. What he wants is 'a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds ; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally conducive to action'.¹⁹ How much he desired that "all men were so constituted that in their minds *all* these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work were equally present in full".²⁰ To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is his ideal of religion. And this ideal, he thinks, is attained by what we, in India, call *Yoga*—Union. 'To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity ; to the

mystic, between his lower and Higher Self ; to the lover, union between himself and the God of Love, and to the philosopher, it is the union of *all* existence. This is what is meant by *Yoga*. And the man who seeks after this kind of union is called a *Yogi*.²¹ The Swami, like Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad-gita*, wants everyone of us to be a *yogi*. Can there be a more comprehensive synthesis and reconciliation of the different paths to liberation than this? But it should be noted here that although, for Swami Vivekananda, an integrated cultivation of all these paths is the ideal of religion, yet he would admit that any one of the paths, if followed sincerely and entirely, will lead to the ultimate goal—liberation. This was epigrammatically expressed by him in a slightly different way when he said: "Do this (i.e. manifest the divine in you) either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one or more, or all of these—and be free".²²

Now we come to the second part of our subject, namely, the practical application of Neo-Vedantism. But here the question at once arises: How can there be any practical application of such a highly abstract philosophy as Vedantism, be it old or new? Swami Vivekananda first points out certain historical facts which clearly show how *Vedanta* was a practical philosophy in the past. Many of the Vedantic thoughts emanated from persons who lived the busiest lives in the world, namely, the ruling monarchs of ancient India. The best parts of the *Vedanta* philosophy, he thinks, were not the outcome of meditation in the forests only, but were thought out and expressed by brains which were busiest in the everyday affairs of life. Then there is that amazing fact that the *Bhagavad Gita*, which is the quintessence of *Vedanta* philosophy, was taught to Arjuna by Sri Krishna in the battlefield of Kuruksetra. All this creates a strong presumption in our minds that *Vedanta* can even now be a practical philosophy. Let us see how.

The first thing that we should constantly bear in mind is that our life is one and that there is one life in all. It is not true to say that we live two lives, one religious and the other worldly. It is the same life that we live when we are religious and also when we are engaged in ordinary worldly activities. If we sincerely believe in this, then the ideals of religion will more and more enter into all our thoughts and shape our practical conduct.

Then we see that what the *Gita* primarily teaches is not inactivity or

cessation of practical activity, but incessant activity in a calm and passionless spirit. We should not think that there cannot be activity without passion. Far from it, we see that our activity is clogged when through violent passions we lose balance of mind, and that we can do more work when our mind is free from passions. We should not also think that to make the ideal of the *Vedanta* practical means to drag the ideal down to the level of our life of blind passions and animal impulses. It is just the other way about. It really means that we are to make our ordinary life conform to the ideal, to elevate it to the level of the ideal. As Swami Vivekananda says: "The actual should be reconciled to the ideal, the present life should be made to coincide with life eternal".²³

The central ideal of *Vedanta* is Oneness. 'There are no two in anything, no two lives. There is but One Life, One World, One Existence, everything is that One, the difference is in degree and not in kind'.²⁴ It is the same life that pulsates through all beings, from *Brahma* to the amoeba, the difference is only in the degree of manifestation. We must not look down with contempt on others but we should respect them. We are all moving towards the same goal. We should help others to reach the goal, and never do anything that may hurt them or obstruct them.

"The *Vedanta* can be carried into our everyday life, the city life, the country life, the national life, and the home life of every nation".²⁵ A religion that cannot be put into practice, that cannot help man wherever he may be, is not of much use and value. Judged by this test *Vedanta* will be found practical.

What the *Vedanta* asks us to do is to know ourselves and to have faith in ourselves. Faith in ourselves will do everything. The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new *Vedanta* teaches that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself. But that faith is not selfish faith. It is not faith in the little, limited self which stands opposed to other selves. It is faith in the universal self, the self that is in me, that is in you, that is in all. It means, therefore, faith in all, because you are all. Love for yourselves means love for all, for men, animals and everything, for you are all one.

Know thy self. This is not an impossible and impracticable demand, but

quite a feasible and practical proposition. What is your self? Is it the clothes you put on? Certainly not. For, clothes wear out and are cast off, but you remain the same self. Is your self the body or the senses, the mind or the intellect, or even the ego? None of them. For these also constantly change and fluctuate, but you remain the same self. Your real self is the abiding and constant consciousness, the standing witness in you, which observes all changes in your body and mind, but is not involved in them, rather it stands above them. It is the pure, immutable, unflickering light of consciousness in you, which is also pure existence and is ever free and blissful. You are that *sat-cit-ananda*, not the small, miserable being that you ignorantly think yourself to be. Your self is the universal self that is one with all things and beings, that shines in the sun, the moon and the stars and illumines them all. You are first to hear about this self and then constantly meditate on it. Think of yourself as "the birthless, the deathless, the blissful, the omniscient, the omnipotent, ever-glorious soul". Think on it day and night till the thought enters into your flesh and blood, and you have a vision of the *Atman* as *Brahman*. Here you realise your real self as none other than *Brahman* itself. With this realisation there comes a total transformation of your life and your activities. You live the Vedantic ideal, it becomes a matter of your practical life.

Then the *Vedanta* asks us to find God in our self and worship that God. What is more practical than this? God is not a being far off from you, hidden somewhere behind the clouds and seated in His exalted throne in a region far beyond. He is the self in you. It is the best known of all. It is through the self that you know anything. "The self is known, therefore, to every one of us, man, woman or child, and even to animals. Without knowing Him we can neither live nor move, nor have our being; without knowing this Lord of all, we cannot breathe or live a second. The God of the *Vedanta* is the most known of all, and is not the outcome of imagination".²⁶ Is it not preaching a practical God? Where is there a more practical God than He, whom I see inside me, outside me, before me, behind me, a God omnipresent, in every being and in every thing. We are to see God in everything we see and worship Him. It is not the God in temples, in symbols and images that we are to worship; it is not the God in the high

heaven, whom we cannot see, that we are to worship. We are to worship the living God, whom we see before us and who is in everything we see. We are to worship God in all men and women, in the young and the old, in the sinner and the saint, in the Brahmin and the pariah, especially the poor, the sick, the ignorant, the destitute, and the downtrodden, for the God in them wants our worship, our care and service. Shall we turn them out of our doors, weeping and disappointed? The *Vedanta* says, serve them, worship them, and that will be serving and worshipping the living God, the omnipresent God, the highest God. "He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva, and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary".²⁷

The real practical side of Neo-Vedanta is to see God in everything, and as everything. The earth and the heaven, fire and sun, the moon, the stars and the water are all forms of *Brahman*. All men and women, and even animals are forms of *Brahman*. We are all children of the immortal, ever pure and ever free. Nothing can bind us, nothing can defile us. Thou art that (*tat-tvam-asi*),* we are all that. We are not really the weak, sinful and miserable beings that we sometimes think ourselves to be. "The *Vedanta* recognises no sin. If there is sin, this is the only sin—to say that you are weak, or others are weak".²⁸ The highest prayer that the *Advaita* teaches is this: "Rise, thou effulgent one, rise thou who art always pure, rise thou birthless and deathless, rise almighty, and manifest thy true nature. These little manifestations do not befit thee".²⁹ What a clarion call to one and all to 'arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached'!

Another practical side of Swami Vivekananda's Neo-Vedantism is, the call to us to be first Gods, and then help others to be Gods. We should look upon every man, woman, and everyone as God. So we are really to serve them and not help them. But if it be our good fortune to help any one of them, we should do it only as a worship. The poor and the miserable give us opportunity to serve God coming to us in the person of the diseased, the lunatic, the leper and the sinner. It was this conviction that inspired one of Swami Vivekananda's memorable utterances: "May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only

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God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship”.³⁰

Another important practical side of Swamiji's Neo-Vedanta is acceptance, not mere tolerance, of other forms of worship. According to it, other forms of worship, including the worship of God through ceremonials and forms, are not in error. It is the journey from truth to truth, from lower truth to higher truth. We should see others with eyes of love, with sympathy, knowing that they are going along the same path that we have trod. So the *Advaita* of Swami Vivekananda not only tolerates but accepts and respects other religions of the world as but different paths that lead to the same goal—God.

Such is Swami Vivekananda's Practical Vedanta, a living *Vedanta*, and not a dry and dead theory of the *Vedanta*. It is the *Vedanta* of the forests come back to our home, our city, and our society; it is the *Vedanta* entering into our ordinary life and conduct, it is the *Vedanta* that may inspire our individual life, social life and national and international life. Swami Vivekananda wants us to carry the eternal message of the *Vedanta* to every door and to every corner of the world. It is this *Vedanta* that inspires the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and their vast and varied humanitarian activities. Let them go on for long till the whole world comes to realise the truth: “*Tat-tvam-asi*”, and is transformed into heaven.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Swami Vivekananda, *Jnana Yoga*, p. 301.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 302.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
4. *Ibid.*, p. iii.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-24.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
14. Swami Vivekananda, *Practical Vedanta*, pp. 90-91.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
17. Swami Vivekananda, *Jnana Yoga*, p. 135.
18. Swami Vivekananda, *Practical Vedanta*, p. 109.
19. *Jnana-Yoga*, p. 407.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 408.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 408-09.
22. Swami Vivekananda, *Raja-Yoga*, p. 1.
23. *Practical Vedanta*, p. 11.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
27. *Thus Spake Vivekananda*, p. 42.
28. *Practical Vedanta*, p. 30.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
30. Swami Vivekananda, *Thoughts of Power*, p. 29.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON PRACTICAL VEDANTA

During his short and fruitful career, Swami Vivekananda made himself the herald of non-dualist *Vedanta* which he held to be—and rightly so—the key-stone of the Brahmanic element in Indian life, the herald not merely of theoretical but also of practical *Vedanta*, as he calls it, of the *Vedanta* which is a source and guiding principle of personal and collective life and a factor of civilization.

Theoretical or practical, *Advaita Vedanta* is based on an original and powerful spiritual experience which, by the strength of its penetration, is present in a very large number of manifestations of the spirit of India. It even extends beyond—in our opinion—the Vedantic bounds. No matter how divergent the respective doctrines of Buddhism and Hinduism may be, it is perhaps not wrong to read through them the experiences of this spirit, experiences intrinsically very alike. Outside India, the *Enneads* of Plotinus, some of the spiritual thoughts of Meister Eckhart—to mention only these two examples—seem akin to this fundamental mystical thinking of India.¹ An affinity which is less a result of historical influences—uncertain when they are not improbable—than that of the profound spontaneity of the human being, essentially one in the diversity of time, place, and culture.

If it is true, as we believe it to be, that the particular case of India is of great human significance, then Swami Vivekananda has rendered valuable service to all those who are concerned about the spiritual development of humanity by applying himself zealously and with so much talent to the task of making the governing values of high Indian tradition better known to his country and to the outside world, values which he “lived” with all his being while explaining them to others.

For this type of spirituality we would perhaps, for our part, propose an interpretation which would not coincide on important points with those accepted by Swami Vivekananda after many a great scholar of *Vedanta*. To him this non-dualist mystical thinking constitutes the summit towards which all other forms of mystical thinking converge. We think that this

spiritual experience, which we can call *natural* (*sahaja*), is being centred on the recognition (*pratyabhijna*) of the Self by the Self due to the immanent presence of the spirit to itself, is purely authentic on its own plane: its ways—immanent ways—have been marvellously elucidated by the great exponents of religion in India; as we said, it is significant and of value beyond the frontiers of India. But we do not think that the mystical thinking based on divine transcendence and grace, from beyond the innermost nature of the Soul, can be regarded as a mere approach of natural mystical thinking. Between these two types of spirituality we shall certainly be able to find analogies; they matter less than the “super-essential” difference which distinguishes them. Such is the conclusion recommended to us by phenomenology, metaphysics and our Christian faith.

Let us come back to practical *Vedanta* such as it was preached by Swami Vivekananda; the present interest of his message manifests itself in more than one way. We shall illustrate it by the doctrine of *means and ends* which he outlined at the beginning of the speech made in Los Angeles on January 4, 1900. Did not Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, say of this doctrine in an address delivered to the UNESCO in Paris on September 21, 1962, that it sums up the essential elements of the political ethics taught by Mahatma Gandhi to his country?

Let us quote this noble passage of Swami Vivekananda: “One of the greatest lessons I have learned in my life is to pay as much attention to the means of work as to its end. He was a great man from whom I learned it, and his own life was a practical demonstration of this great principle. I have been always learning great lessons from that one principle, and it appears to me that all the secret of success is there: to pay as much attention to the means as to the end.

“Our great defect in life is that we are so much drawn to the ideal, the goal is so much more enchanting, so much more alluring, so much bigger in our mental horizon, that we lose sight of the details altogether.

“But whenever failure comes, if we analyse it critically, in ninety-nine per cent. of cases we shall find that it was because we did not pay attention to the means. Proper attention to the finishing, strengthening, of the means, is what we need. With the means all right, the end must come. We forget

that it is the cause that produces the effect: the effect cannot come by itself; and unless the causes are exact, proper and powerful, the effect will not be produced. Once the ideal is chosen and the means determined, we may almost let go the ideal, because we are sure it will be there, when the means are perfected. When the cause is there, there is no more difficulty about the effect, the effect is bound to come. If we take care of the cause, the effect will take care of itself. The realisation of the ideal is the effect. The means are the cause: attention to the means, therefore, is the great secret of life."²

We would like to know the name of this noble personality who taught such a doctrine to Swami Vivekananda. We would also like to know if Gandhi read the passage we have just quoted—or another one of the same kind—and if it is from him that he got, directly or indirectly, the first inspiration for his own meditations on this theme which he was going to make one of the corner-stones of his action. We wish an experienced historian would enlighten these obscure points for us to help us better understand the internal relations of *karma yoga*, the importance attached to means and non-violence. Be that as it may, let us read two texts of Gandhi where his noble conviction is expressed with special stress.

"Means and ends are convertible in my philosophy of life".³

"They say 'means after all are means'. I would say "means are after all everything. As the means so the end. Violent means will give violent *svaraj*. That would be a menace to the world and to India herself. There is no wall of separation between means and end. Indeed, the creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, never over the end. Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception. Holding such a belief, I have been endeavouring to keep the country to means that are "purely peaceful and legitimate".⁴

As we can see, Swami Vivekananda's doctrine on the importance attached to means paves the way, in a certain manner, for the Gandhian reflections on the purity of means. Undoubtedly there are glaring differences, the most important being the absence of explicit reference to non-violence in Vivekananda's text. But one way or another, we find the same insistence

on the same paradox ; means determine the end as much as, or more than, the end determines the means. Of course, such an expression should not be taken literally and its purposely paradoxal character should not be ignored. It still remains that it is fraught with truth ; deep and universal truth, but on which our times seem in special need to meditate and to put into practice. The pages of primary importance dedicated (as early as 1933) by the great philosopher Jacques Maritain to "the purification of means"⁵ or those, more recent, written by P. Regamey on the mystical importance of means⁶ bear witness with many other documents, which we shall not undertake to quote, to the same urgent need in the West. These two authors of course take the arguments of Mahatma Gandhi into earnest consideration. Our purpose here was to stress that the lucid genius of Swami Vivekananda had foreshadowed several decades ago one of the most serious preoccupations of the conscience of our days.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Here we do not speak of certain schools of *bhakti* which belong to another kind of spirituality.
2. *The Complete Works of Vivekananda*, Vol. II, 9th Edn., p. 1.
3. *Young India*, Dec. 26, 1924.
4. *Ibid.*, July 17, 1924.
5. Jacques Maritain, *Du régime temporel et de la liberté*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1933 ; Chapter III.
6. Pi Régamey, O. P. *Non violence at conscience chrétienne*, Paris CERF Editions, 1958 ; third part, chapter IX, section II.

AMERICAN PROTESTANT THOUGHT AND EASTERN FAITHS

The new cultural reciprocity between East and West has as one of its consequences the emergence of a fresh theological stance for many American Protestant Christians. This stance is hardly new among Asians. It was a characteristic one for Sri Ramakrishna and his great disciple, Swami Vivekananda. An attitude they articulated so well in the 19th century is now, translated into Christian terms, finding expression in the West in the 20th century. It is the stance or attitude of willingness to combine commitment to God as He is understood within one's own tradition with openness to the insights, claims, and values of commitments made in the contexts of other traditions. To define more exactly the elements of this stance is the contribution to the Vivekananda *Festschrift* which this paper intends.

No claim is made that the new attitude is now orthodoxy for all American Protestants, or even that it is a majority opinion. The most that can be said and defended is that some very influential representatives of Protestant thought are pointing to their own emerging interest in the world's great religions and recognizing the change which this is effecting in their whole theological perspective. There is also a significant body of the Protestant laity whose interest in comparative religion has been steadily on the increase, but few laymen write the articles which would help one to identify the exact nature and intensity of their concern. However, the point to be made is not a statistical one involving estimates of how many people think thus and so. It is, rather, that there is serious grappling with an issue to which a shrunken globe has given fresh urgency. This is clearly seen in the pages of America's most widely read, non-denominational, Protestant weekly journal, *The Christian Century*. Because of this publication's position as a bellwether of American Protestantism, and because of the significance found in analyzing what is appearing in one single published source, I have chosen to limit the references for the paper to the one journal and selected articles from its weekly issues for the last three years.

The Era of Self-Criticism

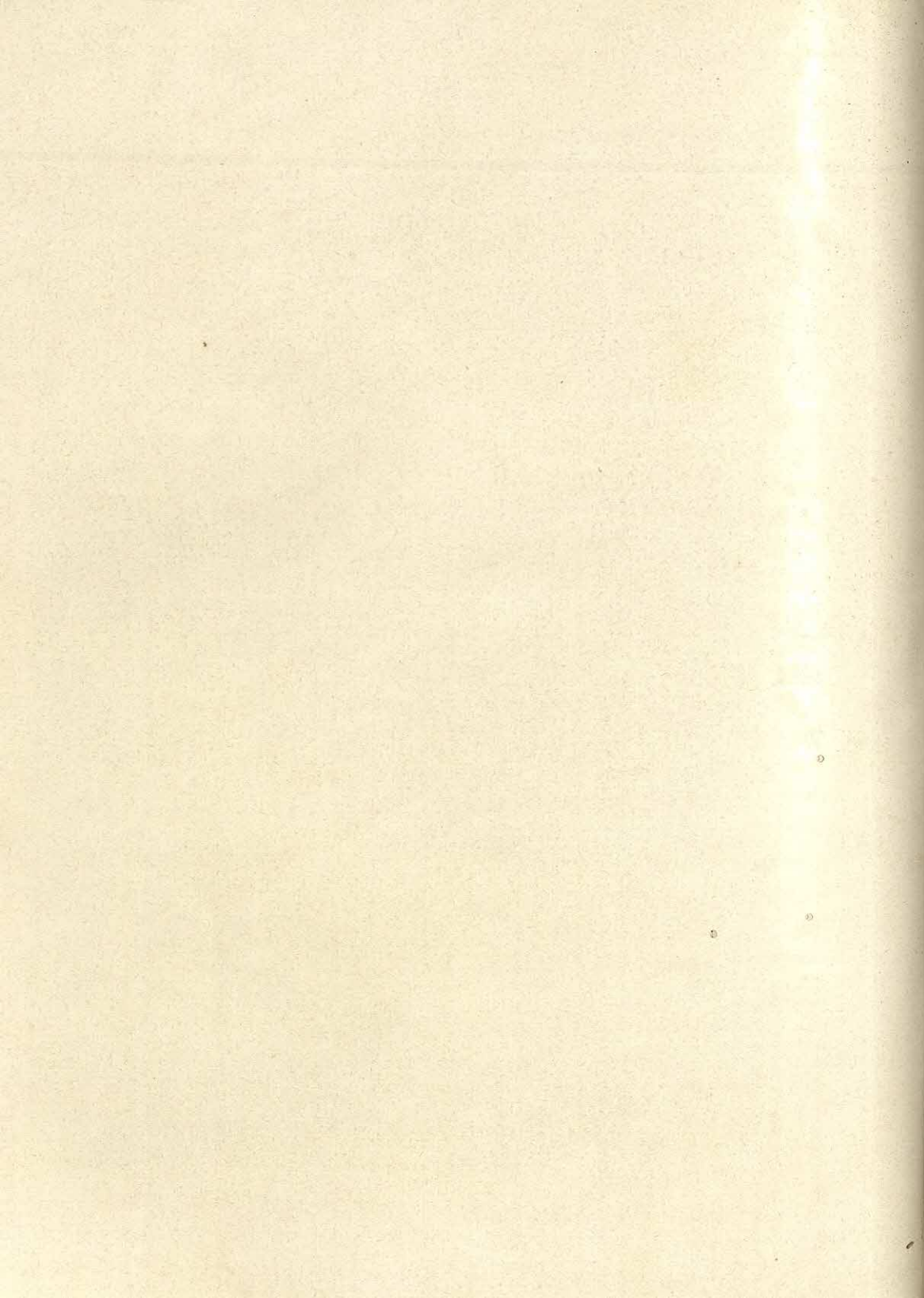
The first identifiable ingredient of the "new stance" is the element of humility or willingness to be self-critical. The abundant confidence of a John R. Mott, earlier in our century, that the world might be "won for Christ" in one generation's time has been replaced by sober admission that the task was not possible and may not even be desirable. This is not the place to analyze all causes of the change in outlook, but two causes at least are worth mentioning. The first is that American Protestants have awakened to the weakness and confusion of a missionary enterprise marked by multi-denominational division and competition. They have found their divisions imperilling their effectiveness at home, and they see also that these divisions have surely been even more disabling abroad. A second cause of changing outlook is a new awareness of social context—that is, the fact that all faiths and their institutions are deeply imbedded in culture and therefore both enriched by its values and tainted by its deficiencies. Conversely, no faith is a body of absolute truth transcendent of all historical and earthly contingencies. Some sociological analysis of domestic Protestantism has clarified this fact, and the resurging vitality of indigenous religions in newly independent countries has underlined it.

Thus Protestantism is confessing its own shortcomings on the one hand and a formerly unseen strength in many of the world's great religions on the other. The confession is eliciting nothing less than what one observer calls an "agonizing reappraisal" with regard to what stance "Christians ought to take in relation to other faiths."¹ The agony arises from the necessity of resolving the apparent contradiction between response to a revelation which the Christian views as for all men and yet his reluctance to insist that his revelation is the *only* one for all men. The resolution proposed is provisional rather than final. Professor Best rejects syncretism and foregoes prophecy about some far-distant universal adoption of the Christian revelation. The future he can see "for the Christian faith as it faces the other great living religions lies," he says, "in the direction of repentance."²

The theme of humility and self-criticism is made still more explicit by



Swami Vivekananda in Pasadena, U.S.A.



Hideo Hashimoto. He begins by rejecting the two radically-alternative views that all religions are essentially the same beneath the surface or that Christianity is the one true faith. His interest lies, rather, in what he calls confessionalism. Here the emphasis is not on the truth or falsehood of *religion*, but on commitment to God as He is revealed historically and existentially by Jesus Christ. If a person's experience of the grace of God has the Christian revelation as a context, then he is bound to find finality and universal relevance in this revelation. Nevertheless, if he is really committed to Christ, he will be led not into "disrespect for other religions," but to "repentance, humility, and profound respect for other persons and *their ultimate commitments*" (italics mine).³

Humility, of course, can be an empty gesture if one has nothing to repent of in particular. For this reason, it is helpful when Hashimoto adds that Christians share with others in the sin of idolatry. "The idolatry of family, nation, race, money, power, status, organization (including the church) and so on are the perennial objects of idolatry in all cultures, especially those like ours which are tinged with religiosity." He concludes that a humble Christian will be led by commitment to supplement his self-criticism with a study of other religions and a "sense of identification" with their devotees. The author's theology of missions emerges clearly.

The commandment to be his [Christ's] witnesses constrains us in this spirit of love to serve and bear witness without in any way trying to manipulate the lives of others. The mission of the Christian is not to "convert" non-Christians to Christianity. It is to serve others in the spirit of Christ and bear witness to what he has done.⁴

The late Richard Niebuhr has summarized well the viewpoint which rests upon deep conviction and yet refuses to regard this conviction as the only valid one. After noting that the faith which bridges the gulf between a sovereign God and sinful man is always a divine gift, he wrote:

So far as I could see and can now see that miracle [the gift of faith or salvation by grace] has been wrought among us by and through Jesus Christ. [But] I do not have the evidence which allows me to say that the miracle of faith in God is worked only by Jesus Christ and that it is never given to men outside the sphere of his working, though I may

say that where I note its presence I posit the presence also of something like Jesus Christ.⁵

The Era of Theological Relativism

Some of the comments quoted anticipate what is now to be described—in terms broader than mere humility—as a movement toward theological relativism. I do not mean by “relativism” any idea that all doctrines are equally true and/or equally false. Certainly, the meaning for American Protestants is that they have been led by self-criticism to recognize the relative or provisional character of their human formulations of truth, absolute or otherwise. In other words, when repentance has demolished pretensions to absoluteness and exclusive finality, the task of reconstruction begins. What are the building blocks?

The first constructive premise is that God reveals what He will. He is the divine, the absolute, the unconditioned, Man is creature; he receives, responds, tries to express what he understands. His expression issues in a “religion,” but religion or faith is “not identical with God’s revelation.”⁶ If the Christian’s witness is merely to his religion, then he worships a structure of humanly devised ideas. But “God transcends each of his manifestations” and no religion may claim “absoluteness for itself in its particular forms of life.”⁷

The second constructive premise is much like the first. If God is absolute and the initiator of all truth, then it is likely that He reveals *where* He wills as well as what He chooses. For men of one religious tradition, therefore, to claim exclusive finality for the revelation made to them is presumption. Averill asks, “Is God at work in cultures other than our own?” and answers, “Of course he is.” And “Is God at work in religions other than the Christian? I believe he is . . . and that his work . . . in those other faiths . . . will be a work consistent with the work he has revealed in Jesus Christ.”⁸ John Bennett, making the point negatively, writes, “I reject all attempts to surround the gospel with . . . exclusive claims which deny that God can reveal himself by other means,”⁹ while James Pike declares unambiguously. “Thuth is truth wherever it is found; and all truth

is God's truth . . . as to that which can save, it is on this earth broader than any particular historical revelation, even the full revelation in Jesus Christ."¹⁰

From these premises is derived an idea of the proper posture or conduct for a Christian in encounter with other faiths. He is to confess his own finiteness and make his witness to God, humbly, joyfully, but without making absolutist claims or aggressive demands.

Analyzed, the elements of the position are three. The first is an emphasis on particularism in place of exclusivism. As Best remarks, "truth is always particular truth about something or someone,"¹¹ and it can be proclaimed as having universal validity without linking it to a claim that one's own "particulars" are the only ones there are. For, as Norman Pittenger insists, "there is no knowledge which is *exclusively* 'saving knowledge,' although there is knowledge which in *special and distinctive ways* thus operates . . ."¹²

The problem of theological reconstruction is regarded by Wilfred Cantwell Smith as most serious in this very area of the relation of faiths. He sees the task as hardly begun. But his counsel, while we wait, leads to the second element of the newly emerging position. This is the emphasis on love and sharing, without necessarily agreeing. "I . . . urge all Christians," he writes, "to love and respect the faith of Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and the others . . . without waiting for the theologians."¹³ Warren Ashby states the matter with equal force:

The day of imperialism, whether cultural or religious or nationalistic, is, or should be, over . . . The bridging of the diversities among men requires persons who, loyal to their own trust, can and will enter as fully as possible into the lives of others. There is need for such persons . . . who can encounter and experience other faiths, other races, other cultures. Protestantism needs to renew today the ancient insistence that the neighbour and the self are related to each other because each, in his individuality, is related to God, and that the self does not have to agree with the neighbour (who may even be experienced as an enemy) to love him and to share life with him.¹⁴

Finally, out of sharing may come learning—not a mere "learning about"

other faiths, but learning of a kind enriching to the appreciation of one's own faith. Paul Tillich points the way by suggesting that encounter with other faiths forces fresh theological construction or reconstruction within one's own context. His is not an eclecticism of borrowing scattered insights and patching them together. It is an open-minded delight in being reminded by the Japanese attitude toward nature, or the Zen Buddhist's path of stern discipline, or the East's wisdom writings, that Christianity, too, has potentiality for recovering or evolving comparable values though it expresses them with its own language and experiences them in the context of its own history.¹⁵ Pike stresses the criticizing function of such learning when he says, "more and more I have become interested in what the church could 'hear' from such people [as agnostics, members of other world religions, and others]." The result of such encounter has been his becoming "more and more a critic of the church as well as a believer."¹⁶

It may be well to warn again that the views here recounted are not permitted to go unchallenged by other influential Protestants. Deane Fernald has marshalled a chorus of dissenting voices, all of them stressing the particularism of the Christian revelation *and* its exclusivist finality.¹⁷ Fernald himself has been charged with bearing the taint of an eclectic universalism. "The universalist," says Fernald, "can only reply that although he himself may find the love of God and neighbor best revealed in Christ, he must allow his neighbor to find that same love in his experience and his traditions."¹⁸

The observer may be excused if he sees little difference between Fernald's "universalism" and the position of the "confessionalist" who witnesses joyfully to the "final adequacy" of God's revelation to him in Jesus Christ without, however, finding it necessary to deny the presence of saving revelation within other faiths. The direction of both seems to be that of witness, service, sharing, learning, the allowance of freedom to the hearer and possible beneficiary, and refusal to make invidious comparisons. A world which is fast ending all cultural isolation will look upon an absolutist, exclusivist religion as at best a quaint anomaly or at worst a dangerous source of renewed infection by the old disease of religious megalomania. From this, the voices of American Protestant Christians cited here would

hasten to save us, and we honor in the present volume one who would have applauded their every effort.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON HARMONY OF RELIGIONS AND RELIGIOUS SECTS

*'Asato Ma Sadgamaya, Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya, Mrityor Ma Amritam Gamaya'**—This prayer of the Vedic Rishi to the Divine Infinity to lead from the Unreal to the Real, from Darkness to Light and from Death to Immortality has been heard for ages, in all languages and in all the religions of this vast earth. For, as Swami Vivekananda says, 'No search has been dearer to the human heart than that which brings to us light from God.'¹

This search for God is religion. 'The sumtotal of this whole universe is God Himself,' said Swamiji. 'This universal intelligence is what we call God. Call it by any other name, it is absolutely certain that in the beginning there is that Infinite cosmic intelligence. This cosmic intelligence gets involved, and it manifests, evolves itself . . . then it goes back to its own source'.²

In his efforts to understand this Supreme Reality man was confronted with various difficulties, the first and foremost being the limitations of his senses and mind which prevented him from grasping this Transcendental and Invisible Principle. He had therefore to relate it to the physical and visible world. Nature was the first visible creation of some Higher Being that inspired awe and admiration in man. And so the primitive idea of God was the personification of the powers of nature. This led to nature-worship. The next idea that is obtained in almost all the religions is that God is a Superior Being, living outside the Universe, in the heavens, who governs from that place, is a punisher of the bad and rewarder of the good and so on. This idea later developed inevitably into the concept of a Personal God. In order to reach this Personal God man felt the need of many concrete helps and this explains the natural growth of the mythological and symbolical parts of religions.

But to more evolved minds this idea of a Personal God could not be the last word about God. 'A generalisation ending in the Personal God can never be universal,'³ said Swamiji. The idea of an indwelling spirit—

*असतो मा सद्गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय । मृत्योर्माज्मृतं गमय ।

**Srotrasya srotram manaso mano yad vacho ha vacham sau pranasya pranah*⁴—‘the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of speech and the life of life’—has come from the concept of an Impersonal God. A few individuals with rare intuitive powers went still further and realised God as the Absolute—†*Adristamavyavaharyamagrahyamalakshanamachintyamavyapadesyamekatmapratyayasaram prapanchopasamam santam sivamadvaitam*⁵—‘It is unseen, unrelated, inconceivable, uninferable, unimaginable, indescribable. It is the essence of the one self-cognition common to all states of consciousness. All phenomena cease in it. It is peace, it is bliss, it is non-duality.’

These are the three steps which Indian religious thought took in regard to God during the Vedic age itself. ‘We have seen that it began with the Personal, the extra-cosmic God. It went from the external to the internal cosmic body, God immanent in the universe, and ended in identifying the soul itself with that God, and making one Soul, a unit, of all these various manifestations in the universe.’⁶ But an understanding of these three aspects of God—Personal, Impersonal and Absolute—alone does not constitute religion. Religion is realisation. It is ‘not to know, in the ordinary sense of the word, not intellectual understanding, not a mere rationalistic comprehension of the real things, not mere groping in the dark, but intense realisation, much more real than this world is to our senses.’⁷

Religion is thus not make-believe. It is a real life-force and that is why even after centuries the numerous religions of the world have still a tremendous life-power in them and, as Swamiji emphatically said, ‘Not one of the great religions of world has died ; not only so, each one of them is progressive.’⁸ Though different in names and externals most of the religions have certain tenets and beliefs common to them. First of all, all religions are abstractions of the same Supreme Reality. ‘One fact stands out from all these different religions, that there is an Ideal Unit Abstraction, which is put before us, either in the form of a Person, or an Impersonal Being, or a Law, or a Presence, or an Essence.’⁹

The goal of all religions is also the same in essence. ‘The ultimate goal

*श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यद् वाचो ह वाचं सौ प्राणस्य प्राणः ।

†अदृष्टमव्यवहार्यमग्राह्यमलक्षणमचिन्त्यमव्यपदेश्यमेकात्मप्रत्ययसारं प्रपञ्चोपशमं शान्तं शिवमद्वैतम् ।

of all mankind, the aim and end of all religions, is but one—re-union with God, or, what amounts to the same, with the divinity which is every man's true nature."¹⁰

If this is the case, it goes without saying that the soul is in unity with the Perfect Soul. Unless some unity with the Supreme is presumed, man would not have the power to transcend the limitations of the senses and reach something which is supersensuous. The idea about the existence of a soul, different from the perishing body, its being perfect by nature, its 'fall' and consequent 'restoration' to its original pure nature are corollaries which need no separate proof.

The struggle of the individual soul to free itself from the bondage of life, loathing the limitations placed on it, shows that in the pursuit of this High Ideal there can be no compromise with the world. This struggle for Freedom is the common basis, again, of all religions, and Swamiji has called it 'the first impulse towards becoming religious.' But for this impulse to be free there would be no progress in the world. 'This idea of freedom you cannot relinquish. Your actions, your very lives will be lost without it. Every moment nature is proving us to be slaves, and not free. Yet, simultaneously rises the other idea, that still we are free. At every step we are knocked down, as it were, by *Maya*, and shown that we are bound, and yet at the same moment, together with this blow, together with this feeling that we are bound, comes the other feeling that we are free. Some inner voice tells us that we are free.'"¹¹

From the sinner to the saint all are following this voice of freedom and in rare cases, a man comes forth and, with his bonds snapped, joyfully stands face to face with that Reality and says: **Vedahametaṁ puruṣam mahantam adityavarṇam tamasha parastat, tameva viditva ati mrityumeti nanyah pantha vidyate ayanaya*¹²—'I have realised this Great Being who shines effulgent like the sun beyond all darkness. One passes beyond death only on realising Him. There is no other way of escape from the circle of births and deaths.'

Of thousands who strive to attain this Perfection, only a few realise it.

*वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।

तमेव विदित्वाऽतिमृत्युमेति तान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽन्याय ॥



Swami Vivekananda in Constantinople

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And yet in every country and in every religion have been perfected souls who, having reached the highest state of Realisation, have become the guiding lamp-posts to all spiritual aspirants. The worship of such enlightened God-men becomes the common feature in religions. Along with this, we also see the worship of name and worship of symbols. A Name is said to be very sacred, and the Word is God itself. As for example, the highest manifestation of God in symbol is *Om* and it is called *Sabda Brahman*. Word and Thought are inseparable and as the Word or Name stands for God it is very sacred. 'So we find, that in almost every religion, these are the three primary things which we have in the worship of God—forms or symbols, names, God-men.'¹³

The words or teachings of these prophets and seers, saints and mystics are recorded in texts, and taking them to be the very words of God they are considered very sacred. All religions owe allegiance to certain books, e.g. Hinduism to the Vedas, Christianity to the Bible, and Islam to the Koran. These Scriptures are considered as aids to spiritual growth by all religions.

Thus there is a great similarity on these many points even in different religions and that is why Swamiji remarked, 'so startling is this likeness, at times, as to suggest the idea that in many particulars the different religions have copied from one another. . . . The language of the soul is one, the languages of nations are many ; their customs and methods of life are widely different. Religion is of the soul and finds expression through various nations, languages and customs. Hence it follows that the difference between the religions of the world is one of expression and not of substance ; and their points of similarity and unity are of the soul, are intrinsic, as the language of the soul is one, in whatever peoples and under whatever circumstances it manifests itself. The same sweet harmony is vibrant there also, as it is on many and diverse instruments.'¹⁴

After giving a thorough picture of the essentials of religions, Swamiji gives a very rational exposition of the necessity of religion. He points out that 'religion, as a science, as a study, is the greatest and healthiest exercise that the human mind can have. This pursuit of the Infinite, this struggle to grasp the Infinite, this effort to get beyond the limitations of

the senses, out of matter, as it were, and to evolve the spiritual man—this striving day and night to make the Infinite one with our being—this struggle itself is the grandest and most glorious that man can make Thus religion, as a study, seems to me to be absolutely necessary.’¹⁵

Discussing the necessity of religion for the society as a whole, and not for the individual only, and in reply to the Utilitarians who believe that religion is not useful to society, Swamiji, with great stress on its application to the whole society said: ‘Of all the forces that have worked and are still working to mould the destinies of the human race, none, certainly, is more potent than that, the manifestation of which we call religion. All social organisations have as a background, somewhere, the workings of that peculiar force, and the greatest cohesive impulse ever brought into play amongst human units has been derived from this power.’¹⁶ . . . It is the greatest motive power that moves the human mind. No other ideal can put into us the same mass of energy as the spiritual. So far as human history goes, it is obvious to all of us that this has been the case, and that its powers are not dead.’¹⁷ . . . Religion is the greatest motive power for realising that infinite energy which is the birthright and nature of every man. In building up character, in making for everything that is good and great, in bringing peace to others, and peace to one’s own self, religion is the highest motive power.’¹⁸

If such is really the case, how is it that religion has raised such a dust of hatred that it has dimmed our true sight? How is it that instead of hearing its sweet music of harmony, we hear only strains of discord? How is it that instead of leading society towards the Ultimate Truth, it is leading it astray? The reason is that the popular mind, instead of sticking to the fundamentals of religion, instead of understanding the true import of its essentials, accentuates only the difference between the non-essential constituents of religion, namely, ritual and mythology.

In order to help man to ultimately attain the *summum bonum* of life, the different religions essentially concern themselves with the practical life of men by formulating codes of conduct and spiritual disciplines. These doctrines, these various paths, call upon their followers to pray to the One and the same God. But because the paths are divergent and the details they

enunciate vary, differences arise. Forgetting the essentials, the adherents of the respective faiths lay stress on the non-essential details and thus quarrels arise. Sri Ramakrishna in his beautiful homely way explains how futile arguments and discussions arise due to lack of true knowledge. Once a man entered a wood and saw a small animal on the tree. He came back and told another man that he had seen a creature of a beautiful red colour on a certain tree. The second man replied: "When I went into the wood, I also saw the animal. But why do you call it red? It is green." Another man who was present there contradicted them both and insisted that it was yellow. Presently others arrived and contended that it was grey, violet blue and so on and so forth. At last they started quarrelling among themselves. To settle the dispute they all went to the tree. They saw a man sitting under it. On being asked, he replied: "Yes, I live under this tree and I know the animal very well. All your descriptions are true. It changes colour often. And sometimes it has no colour at all. It is a chameleon." This settled their quarrel.

In like manner till the real aim of religion is not grasped, quarrels between different religions in all its parts will continue. In every religion there are three parts, namely, philosophy, mythology and ritual. Describing these three parts of religion Swamiji said philosophy 'presents the whole scope of that religion, setting forth its basic principles, the goal and the means of reaching it. The second part is mythology, which is philosophy made concrete. It consists of legends relating to the lives of men, or of supernatural beings, and so forth. It is the abstractions of philosophy concretised in the more or less imaginary lives of men and supernatural beings. The third part is the ritual. This is still more concrete, and is made up of forms and ceremonies, various physical attitudes, flowers and incense, and many other things that appeal to the senses. In these consists the ritual.'¹⁹

These are accessories to religion and are necessary for all except a very few, rare cases. "Temples or churches, books or forms, are simply the kindergarten of religion, to make the spiritual child strong enough to take higher steps; and these first steps are necessary if he wants religion."²⁰

Explaining the necessity of the third part of religion Swamiji says: 'Even the expression through mythology, the lives of heroes, is not sufficient

for all. There are minds still lower. Like children they must have their kindergarten of religion, and these symbologies are evolved—concrete examples, which they can handle and grasp and understand, which they can see and feel as material somethings.²¹

Mythology follows close on ritualism. All religions have their own mythology. Richness in ritualism and mythology makes a religion great because it is due to these that various modes of worship, conceptions of different god-heads, numerous sects, scriptures, numberless soul-enthraling hymns and prayers have all come into existence, and through which many souls have been able to experience both the Personal and the Impersonal aspects of the Divine. As Swamiji said, 'We shall find, as we go on, how, in the preparatory stage, we unavoidably stand in need of many concrete helps to enable us to get on; and, indeed, the mythological and symbological parts of religion are natural growths which early environ the aspiring soul and help it Godward.'²²

But the difficulties come when these sects become exclusive—that is, when they reject the sanctity or validity of other sects. And somehow it so happens that the spirit of sectarianism quickly enfolds a man within its own narrow boundaries and makes him bigoted. Swamiji is both harsh and sarcastic on this attitude of the various sects and has more than once remarked, 'One sect has one particular form of ritual, and thinks that that is holy, while the rituals of another sect are simply arrant superstition.'²³ And again, 'One sect thinks a certain form is the right sort of image, and another thinks it is bad. The Christian thinks that when God came in the form of a dove it was all right, but if He comes in the form of a fish, as the Hindus say, it is very wrong and superstitious. The Jews think that if an idol be made in the form of a chest with two angels sitting on it, and a book on it, it is all right, but if it is in the form of a man or a woman, it is awful. The Mohammedans think that when they pray, if they try to form a mental image of the temple with the Kaba, the black stone, in it, and turn towards the west, it is all right, but if you form the image in the shape of a church it is idolatry.'²⁴

This seems foolish talk, but it is actually so. And thus ritualism and mythology are good only as far as they help. But if they do not help men

to open their hearts to God and become more liberal, they degenerate and retard progress. Swamiji strongly condemned this identification of externalities with religion and sounded a note of warning that they should be checked before they become dangerous and pernicious. For if they are not checked they breed contempt and hatred and instead of becoming a blessing religion becomes a curse. And unfortunately the history of religions shows that such has often been the case. Swamiji's remarks on this paradoxical state of affairs in religion are worth recording: 'Though there is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. Nothing has made more for peace and love than religion ; nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion. Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion ; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for men, and even for animals, than religion ; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion.'²⁵

The third part of religion is philosophy and every religion has its own philosophy. The divergence between philosophy and religion that is felt in the West is not felt in India. If philosophy is understood as the search of spirit, religion brings about the immediate awareness of that spirit and hence philosophy forms the very basis of religion. Elucidating this relation between philosophy and religion Swamiji said: 'Religion without philosophy runs into superstition ; philosophy without religion becomes dry atheism.'²⁶ And again, 'Philosophy in India means that through which we see God, the *rational* of religion ; so no Hindu would ever ask for a link between religion and philosophy. Concrete, generalised, abstract are the three stages in the process of philosophy. The highest abstraction in which all things agree, is the One. In religion we have, first, symbols and forms, next mythology, and last, philosophy. The first two are for the time being ; philosophy is the underlying basis of all and the others are only stepping stones in the struggle to reach the Ultimate.'²⁷

Though philosophy is thus shown to be the central theme of religion and mythology and ritual as only the outer sheaths, certain problems centering

round individual spiritual experiences and approaches create disagreement even in philosophies.

The first point of such disagreement is this. The Supreme Reality in its three aspects of the Personal, the Impersonal and the Absolute is experienced from three different standpoints, namely, the *Dvaita*, the *Vishistadvaita* and the *Advaita*. The experiences of the Rishis as embodied in the Upanishads support all the three standpoints. Hence for centuries now the problem is posed whether the one is correct or the other. Commentators have exhausted all their dialectic skill in proving their own positions, and have thus reduced the Scriptures to a bundle of dry, obscure, philosophical speculations. It was left for Swamiji, who himself had plunged into the depths of realisation, to prove that the various doctrines are only progressive stages on the path of realisation. His teaching that 'man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth'²⁸ easily cut the Gordian knot of exclusiveness.

The second problem is about the ways or paths enunciated by the Seers. They contain within them all the ethical codes and spiritual disciplines. These paths have the generic name of *Yoga* in the Hindu philosophy, of which the principal ones are *Raja-yoga*, *Karma-yoga*, *Bhakti-yoga* and *Jnana-yoga*. These divisions are not artificially made but are deeply related to the complexities of human natures. 'Each one has a special nature peculiar to himself which he must follow and through which he will find his way to freedom. . . . First, there is the active man, the worker ; he wants to work, and there is tremendous energy in his muscles and his nerves. His aim is to work, to build hospitals, do charitable deeds, make streets, to plan and to organise. Then there is the emotional man, who loves the sublime and the beautiful to an excessive degree. He loves to think of the beautiful, to enjoy the aesthetic side of nature, and adore Love and the God of Love. He loves with his whole heart the great souls of all times, the prophets of religions, and the Incarnations of God on earth ; he does not care whether reason can or cannot prove that Christ or Buddha existed ; he does not care for the exact date when the *Sermon on the Mount* was preached, or for the exact moment of Krishna's birth ; what he cares for, is their personalities, their lovable figures. Such is his ideal. This is the

nature of the lover, the emotional man. Then, there is the mystic, whose mind wants to analyse its own self, to understand the workings of the human mind, what the forces are that are working inside, and how to know, manipulate, and obtain control over them. This is the mystical mind. Then, there is the philosopher, who wants to weigh everything and use his intellect even beyond the possibilities of all human philosophy.²⁹

To meet the needs of men of different temperaments the different paths of spiritual disciplines have been laid down. "Yoga means 'yoke', to join, that is, to join the soul of man with the Supreme Soul or God."³⁰ Thus the worker or the *karmayogin* realises his own divinity through work performed unselfishly; the emotional man or *bhakta* realises it through devotion and love for a Personal God; the mystic or the *rajayogin* realises it through control of the mind, and the philosopher, *jnanayogin*, through knowledge.

Besides temperament, the three instruments of knowledge, instinct, reason and inspiration help to determine the right path for the aspirant.

Raja-yoga is the science of 'restraining the *chitta* (mind) from breaking into *vruttis* (modifications).'³¹ It thus teaches concentration of mind and purification of intention. These ultimately free man from the limitations of the senses and makes him transcend reason and thus reveal the potential divinity within. This control of *chitta* or meditation is necessary in all the Yogas and hence *Raja-yoga* can be said to be the basis of all of them.

Karma-yoga is the science of right action. It teaches a man to be in the world, but not of it, like the lotus leaf, whose roots are in the mud but which remains always pure. No one can escape the wheel of *Karma*. Every one must work in the universe. '*Karma-yoga*', said Swamiji, 'shows the process, the secret and the method of doing it to the best advantage. . . . Instead of being knocked about in this universe, and after long delay and thrashing, getting to know things as they are, we learn from *Karma-yoga* the secret of work, the method of work, the organising power of work. A vast mass of energy may be spent in vain, if we do not know how to utilise it. *Karma-yoga* makes a science of work.'³² The practice of self-abnegation is the ideal method, and realising selflessness is the goal. Thus the *karma-yogin* without the help of doctrine or theory, through

mere work, solves the very same problem to which the *jnani* applies his reason and inspiration, and the *bhakta*, his love.

Bhakti-yoga is the path of love for the emotional type of man, and it is called the easiest path because it is the most natural way to reach the Divine. Swamiji speaks very highly about this Religion of Love. '*Bhakti* is greater than *Karma*, greater than *Jnana*, because these are intended for an object in view, while *Bhakti* is its own fruition, its own means and its own end.'³³ And yet he has no sympathy or pity for sentimental devotion which is a mark of weakness. One has to be strong in Love too. 'Be strong and stand up and seek the God of Love. This is the highest strength. . . . This love of God cannot be reached by the weak ; therefore, be not weak, either physically, mentally, morally or spiritually.'³⁴

Jnana-yoga is for the reflective nature. By the process of discrimination, the *jnani* leaves out of count one thing after another of the Universe, until he discovers the Essential Unity. When this point is reached he sees that there is but one self in the Universe, of which the lower selves are but manifestations. This is *Advaita* realisation.

In his exhaustive discourses on each of the four Yogas Swamiji has tried to show that each path is efficacious if pursued with sincerity, good intent, reason, non-attachment and renunciation. Though he has said that these paths are followed by persons of different temperaments, he has also made it amply clear that none of these paths is exclusive. More than once has he said: "There is not really so much difference between Knowledge (*Jnana*) and Love (*Bhakti*) as people sometimes imagine. We shall see, as we go on, that in the end they converge and meet at the same point. So also is it with *Raja-yoga*, which when pursued as a means to attain liberation . . . leads us also to the same goal."³⁵ . . . "Work, endless work, without looking at results, and always keeping the whole mind and soul steadfast at the lotus Feet of the Lord . . . this is *Karma-yoga* . . . you must harmonise the four different Yogas,—otherwise how can you always keep your mind and heart wholly on the Lord?"³⁶

The spiritual practices prescribed by these Yogas build up character. But as elements of all the four natures are found intermingled in the complex human nature, a harmonious blending of all the four modes of practice

would go a long way to build an ideal character. With this end in view Swamiji desired that the spiritual disciplines to be followed in his organisation should be based on the synthesis of the four Yogas.

It may be pointed out here that the seal of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission is symbolic of this idea of Swamiji and he himself suggested it. It depicts a lake in which there is a lotus, and there are the swan and the sun, and the whole is encircled by a serpent. Explaining this motif Swamiji said: 'The wavy waters in the picture are symbolic of *Karma* ; the lotus, of *Bhakti*, and the rising-sun, of *Jnana*. The encircling serpent is indicative of *Yoga* and the awakened *Kundalini Shakti*, while the swan in the picture stands for the *Paramatman*. Therefore, the idea of the picture is that by the union of *Karma*, *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and *Yoga*, the vision of the *Paramatman* is obtained.'³⁷

By abandoning the safe paths of accepted ideals, Swamiji thus tried to work out this new gospel of synthesis, which can be said to be his great contribution to the thought and practice of religion. The two philosophical problems about the concept of the Ultimate and the right mode of approach to It are still responsible for the creation of innumerable religions and religious sects in the world. For, these two problems are universal and all other problems can be grouped within their range. Swamiji's efforts to resolve the conflict by an appeal to reason, broad-mindedness and toleration may help the world today to work out some new realisation.

Synthesis or harmony is the key-note of Swamiji's teachings. 'We see various forms of religion in the world. It is a bewildering study, but it is not, as many of us think, a vain speculation. Amidst this chaos there is harmony, throughout these discordant sounds there is a note of concord, and he who is prepared to listen to it will catch the tone.'³⁸

Swamiji himself caught this note of harmony from one who not only spoke about harmony, but *lived* it. He was Sri Ramakrishna. 'It was given to me,' Swamiji said humbly, 'to live with a man who was as ardent a Dualist, as ardent an Advaitist, as ardent a *Bhakta* as a *Jnani*. And living with this man first put it into my head to understand the Upanishads and the texts of the Scriptures from an independent and better basis than by blindly following the commentators ; and in my opinion, and in my

researches, I came to the conclusion that these texts are not at all contradictory.³⁹

But before coming to Sri Ramakrishna it would be proper to say that this note of harmony has been heard in its unbroken strain all along in the Hindu religious consciousness. The conception of the supreme spiritual unity of God is as old in India as the *Rig-Veda*. **Ekam va idam vi babhuva sarvam*⁴⁰—‘That which is One has become the All.’ The Vedic Seers saw this Reality in different lights and spoke variously about It, and yet did not lose the consciousness about its underlying unity. †*Ekam santam bahudha kalpayanti*⁴¹—‘The One Being the Sages contemplate in many ways’ and, ‡*Ekam Sad viprah bahudha vadanti*⁴²—‘the One Being the Wise call by many names.’ Adoration was also offered to the One.

§*Ya eko avarno bahudha shaktiyogad
varnan anekan nihitartho dadhati,
Vichaiti chante viswamadau sa devah
Sa no buddhya subhya samyunaktu.*⁴³

—‘May, He, the One without a Second, who, though formless, produces by means of His manifold powers, various forms without any purpose of His own; from Whom the Universe comes into being in the beginning of creation; and to whom it returns in the end, endow us with good thoughts!’

The Vedic literature is divided into the *Karma-Kanda*—the ritualistic portion of the Vedas, and the *Jnana-Kanda*—the knowledge portion, and there have been followers of either path. For years they have contended that their respective paths are true. The first note of synthesis was struck by the advocates of *Samuchhaya-marga* who preached the combination of *Jnana* and *Karma*, and also of *Bhakti* and *Karma*. The *Bhagavad Gita*

*एकं वा इदं वि बभूव सर्वम् ।

†एकं सन्तं बहुधा कल्पयन्ति ।

‡एकं सद्विप्राः बहुधा वदन्ति ।

§य एकोऽवर्णो बहुधा शक्तियोगा-

द्वर्णानेकान्निहितार्थो दधाति ।

विचैति चान्ते विश्वमादौ स देवः

स नो बुद्ध्या शुभ्या संयुनक्तु ॥

admitted within itself all that was large, catholic and universally true and preached the synthesis of the path of *Karma*, *Bhakti* and *Jnana*. The principles of *Raja-Yoga* too were accepted by it. And in a beautiful verse it summed up the grand Vedantic synthesis of the Upanishads—

* *Ajopi san avyayatma bhutanam Isvaropi san*

*Prakritim svamadhishthaya sambhavamyatmamaya.*⁴⁴

—‘Even being free from births and of inexhaustible Essence (the Absolute), even being the Lord of all created beings (the Impersonal) yet governing My Own nature, I come to birth by my own *Maya* (the Personal God).’

It is a pity, however, that the great commentators overlooked this harmonious teaching of the *Gita* and even resorted to text-torturing to prove the relative truths of their own propositions. All the six systems of philosophy, too, interpreted the Scriptures from their own standpoints. During the *Agama* period, in later times, the *Shaiva*, *Shakta* and *Vaisnava* cults, with their over-elaborated ritualism, brought about more conflicts and the kernel of spiritual truth was lost under the crusts of dogmas, mythologies and rituals.

At the time of Sri Ramakrishna’s advent therefore it was seen that the innumerable religious sects—lost in futile rituals and idle philosophical speculations—had become narrow and exclusive, and the theistic people were hopelessly divided into numerous hostile camps. To avoid being caught in this confusion, men with rationalistic bends of minds, turned either non-believers or sought for solution in religions outside the pale of Hinduism.

Declaring Sri Ramakrishna as a Prophet of Harmony of Religions, Swami Nirvedananda says: ‘In his life one finds an unsurpassed record of God-intoxication, spotless purity and surging love for humanity. And then with his mind broad as the sky, strong as adamant and pure as a crystal, he plumbed the depths of spirituality, collected the treasures of the entire wisdom of the past, tested their worth and reinvested them all with a fresh hall-mark of truth. From his lips the world hears the voice of the ancient

* अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।

प्रकृतिं स्वमधिष्ठाय संभवाम्यात्ममायया ॥

prophets, in his life it discovers the meaning of the scriptures. Through his life and teachings man has got an opportunity of learning the old lessons afresh.

By his deep and extensive spiritual experience of the entire range of Upanishadic truths, Ramakrishna surely heralded an epoch-making Hindu renaissance, which is expected to bring in its train a general spiritual upheaval all over the world. He discovered the wonderful spirit of catholicism within the sealed bosom of Hinduism and released it through his own realizations to spread all over the globe and liberalize all communal and sectarian views. His advent marks a new era in the evolution of religion, when all sects and all communities, keeping intact the individual characteristics of their faiths, will transcend the limitations of narrow and sectarian outlook and thus pave the path for a universal Brotherhood.⁴⁵

Swamiji saw clearly that his mission in life was to spread this spirit of harmony which he saw in the very being of Sri Ramakrishna. With his vast and rich spiritual experience Sri Ramakrishna could declare that all religions and all creeds, Hindu, Islamic, Christian or of any other denomination, based on monism, qualified monism or dualism, with various spiritual paths laid down by the Seers, lead to the same goal, namely God-realization, and hence all were true.

In his simple, homely teachings we find answers to all the knotty problems of religion and philosophy. 'God is formless and God is with form too, and He is that which transcends both form and formlessness. He alone can say what else He is.'⁴⁶ . . . God is one, but many are His aspects. As one master of the house appears in various aspects, being father to one, brother to another, and husband to a third, so one God is described and called in various ways according to the particular aspect in which He appears to His particular worshipper.⁴⁷ . . . The Being is the same, only the names by which He is called by men of different religions are different. A tank may have four *ghats* (landing places with steps). The Hindus drink at one *ghat* and they call it *jal* or *vari*. The Mohammedans drink at another, they call it *páni*. The English, who drink at a third, call it water, and so on. Similarly, some call Him Allah, some Jesus, some Buddha, while

other Brahman, Kali, Rama, Hari etc.⁴⁸ . . . Different creeds are but different paths to reach the One God.⁴⁹ . . . The *Avatara* is always one and the same. Plunging into the ocean of life, He rises up in one place and is known as Krishna, diving again and rising elsewhere, He is known as Christ.⁵⁰ . . . I have practised all the disciplines ; I accept all paths.⁵¹ . . . The Knowledge and Love of God are ultimately one. There is no difference between pure knowledge and pure love.⁵²

Accepting these formulas of his Master Swamiji declared in *sutra* style: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'⁵³ Herein lies the strength and originality of Swamiji's teachings.

Notwithstanding the differences and controversies existing among the various sects of Hinduism, it is still one of the broadest and largest of religions, for, from the high spiritual flights of the *Vedanta* philosophy to the low ideas about idolatry, each and all have a place within its folds. Swamiji therefore did not hesitate to call it a 'mother of religions' in the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. He also declared there: 'I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.'⁵⁴

'Truth', asserted Swamiji, 'has always been universal. . . . Just so with religion. If one creed alone were to be true and all others untrue, you would have a right to say that that religion was diseased ; if one religion is true, all the others must be true. Thus the Hindu religion is your property as well as mine.'⁵⁵ And again dilating upon the same subject he said: "We Hindus accept every religion, praying in the mosque of the Mohammedans, worshipping before the fire of the Zoroastrians, and kneeling before the cross of the Christians, knowing that all the religions, from the lowest fetichism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of them marking a stage of progress.

We gather these flowers all and bind them with the twine of love, making a wonderful bouquet of worship.⁵⁶

From a statement like this with its vast and universal significance one would naturally think that Swamiji preached a fusion of all religious thoughts and that his ideal of one universal religion obviated the necessity of the vast number of religions and religious sects already existing. This would be a wrong assumption. By harmony Swamiji meant unity, and not uniformity. Harmony cannot be obtained by a combination of different views about God etc. Except for one like Sri Ramakrishna whose spiritual consciousness rose above all differences, it is difficult for the ordinary run of men to grasp the Absolute Truth. According to the understanding, intellect, mind and feelings of a man, only partial or relative truths are revealed to him. The greater the number of sects, therefore, the greater the number of people who are benefited.

Explaining thus the necessity of variation for human beings Swamiji said: 'You cannot make all conform to the same ideas: that is a fact, and I thank God that it is so. . . . Now, if we all thought alike, we would be like Egyptian mummies in a museum looking vacantly at one another's faces—no more than that. Whirls and eddies occur only in a rushing, living stream. There are no whirlpools in stagnant, dead water. When religions are dead, there will be no more sects; it will be the perfect peace and harmony of the grave. But so long as mankind thinks, there will be sects. Variation is the sign of life, and it must be there.'⁵⁷

And yet Swamiji often spoke about an ideal Universal Religion. What was it? It is difficult to comprehend the significant ideas of his on this subject. He himself explained it thus: 'What then do I mean by the ideal of a universal religion? I do not mean any one universal philosophy, or any one universal mythology, or any one universal ritual, held alike by all; for I know that this world must go on working, wheel within wheel, this intricate mass of machinery, most complex, most wonderful. What can we do then? We can make it run smoothly, we can lessen the friction, we can grease the wheels, as it were.'⁵⁸

Sri Ramakrishna said: 'As many Faiths, so many Paths'. But the truth of such a statement cannot be grasped unless first and foremost a universal

concept of God is formed and accepted. That is why amplifying this statement of Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji said: 'We must learn that truth may be expressed in a hundred thousand ways, and that each of these ways is true as far as it goes. . . . Suppose we all go with vessels in our hands to fetch water from a lake. One has a cup, another a jar, another a bucket, and so forth, and we all fill our vessels. The water in each case naturally takes the form of the vessel carried by each one of us. . . . So it is in the case of religion; our minds are like these vessels, and each one of us is trying to arrive at the realisation of God. God is like that water filling these different vessels, and in each vessel, the vision of God comes in the form of the vessel. Yet He is One. He is God in every case. This is the only recognition of universality that we can get.'⁵⁹

In order to understand this universality intellectual assent is not the only thing necessary. Practice is of vital importance. 'One ounce of the practice of righteousness and of spiritual Self-realisation outweighs tons and tons of frothy talk and nonsensical sentiments.'⁶⁰ It is only through faith and struggle that one can be convinced that God expresses Himself in many ways. And this conviction alone can lead one to understand Swamiji's ideal of the harmony of religions and universal religion.

In his two lectures, *The Way to the Realisation of Universal Religion* and *The Ideal of a Universal Religion* Swamiji sets forth in details how this ideal can be reached. Two questions arise on this point and Swamiji has not left them unanswered. They are, (1) whether any one among the numerous existing religions can lay claim to be the universal religion, and (2) whether the earth has been blessed by the advent of a perfect man who has practised this ideal and who can thus be a living Ideal.

Swamiji has given the answer to the first question in the affirmative. "*Vedanta*, and *Vedanta* alone can become the universal religion of man, and that no other is fitted for that role".⁶¹ . . . "Through all these various conceptions runs the golden thread of unity, and it is the purpose of the *Vedanta* to discover this thread. 'I am the thread that runs through all these various ideas, each one of which is like a pearl,' says the Lord Krishna; and it is the duty of *Vedanta* to establish this connecting thread".⁶² . . . "The duty of *Vedanta* is to harmonise all these aspirations, to make

manifest the common ground between all the religions of the world, the highest as well as the lowest".⁶³

Vedanta with its alliance only with the *Nyaya* and other philosophies of old would not have stood the test of universality in the modern world. But Swamiji coupled it with another powerful ally, namely science, and thus invested his *Vedanta* with intellectual vigour, progressiveness, comprehensiveness and practicality. The features and objectives of such a *Vedanta* are not divorced from scriptural authorities. It has been enunciated by Gaudapáda, **Asparsayogo vai nama sarvasatvasukho hitah ; avivado avirudhascha desitah tam namamyaham*.⁶⁴ 'I bow down to that *Yoga* that is well known as free from relationships, joyful to all beings, beneficial, free from dispute, non-contradictory, and set forth in the scriptures.'

This is the philosophy of the unity and solidarity of all existence, ensuring happiness and welfare of all beings, that Swamiji preached.

Without an ideal men cannot progress. Swamiji, and following him the modern world, has found such an ideal man in Sri Ramakrishna. With deep veneration Swamiji spoke about him thus: 'The time was ripe for one to be born, the embodiment of both this head and heart ; the time was ripe for one to be born, who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Shankara and the wonderfully expansive, infinite heart of Chaitanya ; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God ; one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the downtrodden, for every one in this world, inside India or outside India ; and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonise all conflicting sects, not only in India but outside of India, and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart into existence. Such a man was born, and I had the good fortune to sit at his feet for years. The time was ripe, it was necessary that such a man should be born, and he came. . . . He was a strange man, this Ramakrishna Paramahansa.⁶⁵ . . . Such a unique personality, such a synthesis of the utmost of *Jnana*, *Yoga*, *Bhakti*, and *Karma*, has never before appeared

*अस्पर्शयोगो वै नाम सर्वसत्त्वसुखो हितः ।

अविवादो अविरोद्धश्च देशितः तं नमाम्यहम् ॥

among mankind. The life of Sri Ramakrishna proves that the greatest breadth, the highest catholicity and the utmost intensity can exist side by side in the same individual, and that society also can be constructed like that, for society is nothing but an aggregate of individuals. The formation of such a perfect character is the ideal of this age.⁶⁶ . . . The time has come for renunciation, for realisation, and then you will see the harmony in all the religions of the world. You will know that there is no need of any quarrel, and then only will you be ready to help humanity. To proclaim and make clear the fundamental unity underlying all religions, was the mission of my Master. Other teachers have taught special religions that bear their names, but this great Teacher of the nineteenth century made no claim for himself. He left every religion undisturbed because he had realised that, in reality, they are all part and parcel of the One Eternal Religion.⁶⁷

In the great synthesis that Swamiji preached can be read the indelible impress of his Master's harmonious realisations. He himself embraced all paths of spiritual progress and thus became the personification of the harmony of religions. Hence with heroic courage he could declare: 'I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all : I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan ; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix ; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of everyone.

'Not only shall I do all these but I shall keep my heart open for all that may come in the future. Is God's book finished? Or is it still a continuous revelation, going on? It is a marvellous book—these spiritual revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran and all other sacred books, are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would leave it open for all of them. We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutation to all the prophets of the

past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future.⁶⁸

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S IDEAL OF RENUNCIATION AND SERVICE

Swami Vivekananda was a man of multiple personality. Though one could see the traces of the heart of the Buddha, the brain of Sankara, the love of Sri Chaitanya, the spiritual fire of Guru Nanaka, the apostolic eloquence of St. Paul and the mildness of Christ—all harmoniously combined in him, one could hardly miss an eloquent expression of the spirit of renunciation and service in and through all the aspects of his life. Renunciation and service were the alpha and omega of his life. He, in fact, was the veritable embodiment of renunciation and service.

Nowhere in the history of the human race would one come across a personality that holds aloft these ideals before humanity with a greater urge and emphasis. Nor does it afford us a second personality, whose ideal of renunciation and service makes a more passionate appeal to human minds and sentiments.

In the spirit of selfless service and sacrifice Swami Vivekananda was therefore second to none. He was unparalleled and unique in his type ever since the days of Lord Jesus Christ. None but a hero can understand and appreciate the heroism of another. To understand and appreciate the great and illustrious Swami Vivekananda the world would require a man of his altitude of thought and personality. A Vivekananda can alone understand and appreciate a Vivekananda. But unfortunately the world has not produced a second personality of his type to understand and appreciate him, far from preaching and popularising his ideals. Swami Vivekananda can better be imagined than described. Very often he is beyond the pale of human comprehension, a man of inconceivable flights in the world of thought and often, to many, an enigma. His was a complex personality, whose complexities in his everyday life and deed made the confusion of the people all the more confused, whenever they would make an attempt to understand him in his real perspective. With all the enormous conflict and confusion with which any ardent student of his life and character is faced, he was all the same a man of plain living and high thinking to those who

could with patience and perseverance, read between the lines of his life and deeds. To others he was, in reality, a paradox—social, intellectual and above all spiritual.

What then is Renunciation and What is Service ?

In the second verse of the 18th Chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* Lord Krishna in reply to a query about *sannyasa* and *tyaga* from his beloved disciple Arjuna, said:¹ “The renunciation of *kamya* actions, the sages understand as *sannyasa* ; the wise declare the abandonment of the fruits of all works as *tyaga*.”*

Renunciation is a spirit of self-abnegation, the spirit that drives away the last tinge of selfishness in one-self. It is in the nature of self to intrude upon everything ; it is in the very nature of human beings to expect something in return for their every undertaking. But the spirit of renunciation replaces self-intrusion by self-extrusion. It is a spirit of self-denial in everything. It really begins when egoism subsides and altruism prevails. It is a state of complete self-effacement by surrendering it as a sacrifice at the altar of the welfare of the whole world. It is the absolute surrender of individual self to the supreme self, when the former identifies itself completely with the latter. It is a state when the “I” with its ego is replaced by “Thou” or “You” leading to a state of perfect peace and bliss. It reminds one of the glorious lines of the *Bhagavad Gita* where the blessed Lord describes it as :² “Having obtained which one regards no other acquisition superior to that and, where established, he is not moved by heavy sorrow.”† The illustrious utterances of the Upanishads completely corroborate the aforesaid statement when it is declared :³ “Neither by progeny, nor by wealth, nor by performances of sacrifices but by renunciation alone, one can attain to immortal bliss.”‡

* काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं सन्न्यासं कवयो विदुः ।

सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं प्राहुस्त्यागं विचक्षणाः ॥

† यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ।

यस्मिन् स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ॥

‡ न प्रजया न धनेन न चेज्यया त्यागेनैकेन अमृतत्वमानशुः ।

Bhagavan Sri Krishna eloquently proclaims the same idea when he declares his decree to his beloved disciple, Arjuna, in the following illustrious lines:⁴ "Better indeed is knowledge than *abhyasa* : meditation is more esteemed than knowledge ; than meditation, the renunciation of the fruit of action is better ; peace immediately follows renunciation."*

Service is the medium in and through which renunciation manifests itself. In fact renunciation is the soul, and service its body. None can realise what renunciation is until and unless it finds its expression in and through selfless service. Service without renunciation is lifeless and renunciation without service is meaningless. Renunciation without service is a soul without a body and service without renunciation is a body without a soul. Service without renunciation, therefore, is no service at all but dis-service. Service and renunciation are in reality one and the same. Service is not an act of charity ; it is in reality an act of love, pure and selfless, done in disregard of consequences. Selfless workers always know how a really ideal service, as distinguished from an ideally real one, is to be conducted in a spirit of disinterested love for a worthy recipient of the same.

Service is of various kinds according as it is ministered on different planes in different times and places,—physical or material, intellectual or educational, social or national and moral or religious. It holds a very high place in every sphere of human life, particularly religious, in India, from the very prehistoric period. If we look back to the Upanishadic age, of which the Buddhistic period is an echo, we come across many a glowing reference to service: "There are three branches of Dharma, the group of sacrifice, study and charity for the first."[†] "One should learn the triad—control of the senses, charity and compassion."[‡] There is also the fourth instruction as to how charity is to be practised, where it enjoins:⁵ "Gifts must be made gladly and willingly ; never give an unwilling gift. Let gifts be made according to one's fortune, with modesty and fear. Let there be also agree-

* श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज् ज्ञानाद्वयानं विशिष्यते ।

ध्यानात् कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥

† त्रयोधर्मस्कन्धा यज्ञोध्ययनम् दानम् इति प्रथमः ।

‡ एतत् त्रयम् शिक्षेत दमम् दानम् दयामिति ।

ment in opinion (a friendly feeling) when the gifts are offered".§ Charity and compassion are extolled everywhere although some limitations are put on them at times. Lord Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* says: "Sacrifice, gift and austerity are purifying even to the wise".* Charity has, of course, its own restricted sphere. But the Lord speaks of the Saints whose love carries away all in its sweep.⁷ *Bhagavan* says: "With the imperfections exhausted, doubts dispelled, senses controlled engaged in the good of all beings, the Rishis obtain absolute freedom. Verily they reach even myself, who having subdued all the senses even-minded everywhere, are engaged with the welfare of all beings."[†]

Service has been characterised by the *Bhagavad Gita* as *satvika*, *rajasika* and *tamasika*. Actions are classified as *karma*, obligatory action, in other words duty, then *akarma*, inaction and also *bikarma*, forbidden action. Of these, duties or obligatory actions have to be performed at all times in all places free from all attachment, and without the least care for their fruits ; and relinquishing action in anticipation of physical troubles and painfulness is *rajasika* and yields no result, whereas, abandonment of the same out of delusion is *tamasika* and can never be tolerated. Men, who are born with divine attributes (*daivi prakriti*), which are marked by non-injury, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquillity, absence of calumny, compassion to beings, non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty and absence of fickleness, are really the salt of this earth. Non-injury and compassion to all beings, irrespective of any distinction, are two of the most noble characteristics of the holy life.

The consensus of erudite opinion of the learned sages of the East and

§ श्रद्धया देयम् । अश्रद्धया न देयम् । श्रिया देयम् । ह्रिया देयम् । भिया देयम् । संविधा देयम् ।

* यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत्
यज्ञोदानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥

† लभन्ते ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृषयः क्षीणकल्मषाः ।
छिन्नद्वैधा यतात्मनः सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥

.....

संनियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥

the savants of the West holds that *Bhagavad Gita* is not only the compendium of, but also the best commentary on, all the Vedas and Vedantas. In the words of *Bhagavan* Sri Ramakrishna the message of this great book can be put in a nutshell in two letters, which one gets by reversing the word "GITA". Sri Ramakrishna in his own inimitable way often said: "Do you know what *Bhagavad Gita* means to preach, what is its message? Utter the word 'Gita' several times and you will find that the word 'Gita' comes to be pronounced as *Tyagi*, which means, one who renounces." The message of the *Bhagavad Gita* can be presented from different angles of vision, namely as (1) the end in itself and (2) a means to the end. Of course from the first standpoint the message of *Bhagavad Gita* is तत्त्वमसि "Thou art that", which reveals itself when the eighteen chapters of the book are divided into three of six each. The first six chapters explain not only the path of work without any desire for fruits whatsoever, but also the nature of "Thou". The second six chapters deal with selfless love or pure devotion and explain the nature of 'That', whereas the last six chapters give a detailed account of the state of the highest knowledge and explain the nature of the middle term "Art" (असि) of the *Mahavakya* and explains how to be established in the complete identity of "Thou" (त्वं) with "That" (तत्). But from the second standpoint when a spiritual aspirant becomes awfully earnest to find out a way to the goal—a means to the end—he has no other way than to forego all the ideas of fruits or results of the actions in life and to take to the principle, "Duty for duty's sake—Work for work's sake"—without the least hope of any return whatsoever for all the actions that he happens to do, be it of the past and present, nay also of the future. In brief, he has to renounce everything and become a pure, immaculate Renunciationist, which is the keynote of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Work, whether good or bad, is always determined by its motive and the attitude with which the particular motive is realised. Work with motive does not come within the purview of service; for service is always pure and selfless. The attitude of one doing service to other (*sevaka*) should be like that of a humble servant, who would consider that to serve only he has the right and not to its consequence. It is 'work for work's sake, duty for duty's sake.' It is *seva* or service, which is to be performed with humbleness,

with all humility and reverence. He should be conscious of the fact that service (*seva*) is not *daya* or an act of kindness or compassion. An act of kindness or compassion (*daya*) has in it that proud sense of superiority from which *seva* (selfless service) is absolutely free. The *sevaka* feels grateful to the man whom he serves and thinks that it is he (*sevyā*) who has kindly agreed to give him the opportunity of practising a selfless service which is regarded as an act of virtue. But he who does good to others in a spirit of showing kindness, remains conscious of the fact that he is the giver and the other is the receiver, making one the superior and the other inferior. This attitude, far from helping self-effacement, the main object of human life, fosters up a spirit of egotism, the bane of human life.

It was a blessed day when *Bhagavan* Sri Ramakrishna passed into a trance in the presence of a number of his ardent disciples. As he began to come down from that state of super-consciousness, he lisped out a few words which were pregnant with deep psychological and philosophical import. In his utterance the disciples heard him utter only two words *daya* (kindness) and *seva* (service) and make a clean distinction between the two. One develops self-egotism, while the other self-effacement. In the group of disciples Swami Vivekananda was also present, and he was much impressed with the deep meaning of this distinction. After some time when he and some of his brother disciples came down-stairs and met together, he made a thoughtful reference to the illustrious utterance of Sri Ramakrishna and said that he would take the earliest opportunity of his life to actualize the true significance of Sri Ramakrishna's utterance.

The day was not far off when both the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission came to be founded by Swami Vivekananda with the noble object of preaching and popularising this spirit of Renunciation and Service in and through these twin institutions. The Ramakrishna Math which is an abode for the monks, where they can practise penances and observe austerities with a view to developing the spirit of self-sacrifice, stands for Renunciation. The Ramakrishna Mission which comprises in itself an endless variety of philanthropic activities stands for Service. This spirit of self-sacrifice or renunciation with which the monks of the Math are imbued resulting from their various kinds of *tapasya* (austerities), finds its

expression in and through the multifarious humanitarian activities, absolutely selfless in character, which are the veritable expression of Service. As repeatedly declared by Swami Vivekananda, the Order of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission is to serve a double purpose—Salvation of one's own self and good of the world* (*atmanomokshartham jagaddhitayacha*).

"The national ideal of India", says Swami Vivekananda, "is renunciation and service. Intensify her in those channels and all other things will come of themselves." Swami Vivekananda as an itinerant monk had the rare privilege of studying the country from the easternmost border of Assam to the westernmost border of Bombay and from the heights of the Himalayas down to Cape Comorin. His intensive study of the country as a whole and her people gave him the rare opportunity of finding out a remedy for all the evils—social, moral and spiritual—that were rampant throughout the whole country. Undoubtedly, to meet this peculiar situation he had to found these twin institutions as a challenge to the onslaught of the western cult, culture and civilization that had found their way to India.

Now from the age of the *Mahabharata* if we come down to the age of Lord Buddha we find how the same national ideals of India were presented to the people with a new life and garb. It is in this period that we find the children of the soil, from the highest to the lowest, from the emperors to the street-beggars—all, imbued with the highest sense of moral principles. In consideration of the demands of the age Lord Buddha did not care to preach the theistic part of our philosophy but laid entire stress upon the ethical side. His passionate and profound teachings touched the softer chords of even the mighty kings of his age, who did not hesitate to lay their lives and wealth, power and property at the altar of the welfare of the country and the people. The whole country as a result was ennobled and uplifted. And India rose once more to the highest pinnacle of her glory in this period, which contributed some of the best and brightest chapters to the history of India.

In the later ages also we do not miss the echo of selfless service. The great saint Acharya Sankara, whose massive intellect is adored and

*आत्मनोमोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च ।

admired by all the savants of the world and who preached Advaita Philosophy more than any other thing, did not forget to pay his tribute to disinterested service. In the glowing lines of Sloka No. 39 of his book *Viveka Chudamani* he says: "The great souls come magnanimous, who do good to others as does the spring, and who, having themselves crossed the dreadful ocean of birth and death, help others to cross the same without any motive whatsoever." Nor should we forget still later ages, when we come across such a personality as Sri Chaitanya, who was selfless love personified.

In keeping with the ancient tradition of India, the present day Social Service movement, as inaugurated by the great and illustrious patriot-saint of India, Swami Vivekananda, the founder of the Order of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, marks an epoch in the history of our country, working as it does through its innumerable centres, both in India and abroad. It may be a wonder to many to see it develop so quickly. The reason is that the thing was adjusted to the age and the country and the development of such a harmoniously adjusted institution is bound to be unhindered.

The *Upanishad* declares—

*"May your mother be God to you ; may your father be an object of worship to you ; may your preceptor be an object of adoration to you." The Great Swami Vivekananda added: †"May the suffering millions be the object of worship to you ; may the illiterate mass be the object of reverential service to you." This, of course, is certainly not a departure from, but a development of the eternal ideas of service imbedded in the scriptures. What one learns from all the aforesaid scriptural injunctions is that selflessness is the life and soul of all kinds of service, and selfishness means utter spiritual death. This is why we find the devotees pray to Lord Vishnu not only for the stilling down of their own minds and the senses but also for the expansion of their selves through selfless love for all beings. In a congregational prayer they burst forth, saying: "Oh Vishnu, the Lord of the Universe, remove my egoism, calm down my mind, control

* मातृदेवो भव । पितृदेवो भव । आचार्यदेवो भव ।

† दरिद्रदेवो भव । सुखदेवो भव ।

my attachment to the mirage of objects of the senses, extend my love to all beings and save me from the ocean of existence."

The old ideal of selfless service has been handed down to posterity without any break through various religious ceremonies and festivals, in which acts of charity play everywhere a very important role. In the *shraddha* and *tarpana* ceremonies libations are offered not only to the souls of one's own departed relatives, but also to all beings. In such performances one has to pronounce and pray :

*"Let the Devas, sages, manes and men and also my relatives both on the father's and mother's sides, all beings—from *Brahman* down to the blade of grass, be appeased." Whosoever is conscious of the greatness of India and her religion cannot but pray to the Lord Almighty exactly in terms of and along with Prahlada :

†"Lord, I do not want any worldly kingdom nor any worldly happiness, nor escape from re-birth ; what I want is the cessation of the affliction of all beings, tormented by the miseries of life."

The spirit of service reaches its consummation when the *sevaka* (server) finds the same Supreme Self everywhere—

‡"All that thou seest is the manifestation of *Brahman*", and voices forth his sentiments in full consonance with the words of the *Upanishad* :

§"Thou art man, woman, youth, maiden. Thou the old man that totterest along on a dried staff, thou art everywhere."¹⁰

A deep penetrative study of the eventful life and the glorious deeds of the great Swami Vivekananda reveals his wonderfully generous and broad heart and his profoundly deep feelings for all irrespective of any distinction. Some of his illustrious utterances permit us to have glimpses of his innermost feelings. Moved to the depth of his great heart, with all emotions

*आब्रह्मभुवनान् लोका देवर्षिपितृमानवाः ।

तृप्यन्तु पितरः सर्वे मातृमातामहोदयाः ॥

†नत्वाहं कामये राज्यं न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम् ।

कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणीनां आर्त्तिनाशनम् ॥

‡सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म ।

§त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि त्वं कुमार श्रुत वा कुमारी ।

त्वं जीर्णो दण्डेन वञ्चसि त्वं जातो भवसि विश्वतोमुखः ॥

he declared¹¹—"May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the God I believe in—the sum total of all souls—and, above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship." And again when conscious of the evils which were eating into the vitals of the nation, he gave an account of his limitless patience and perseverance and addressing the people of our country in his own inimitable terms burst forth saying: ¹² "The national ship of ours, ye children of the immortal Bliss, my countrymen, has been plying for ages carrying civilisation and enriching the whole world with its inestimable treasures. For scores of shining centuries this national ship of ours has been ferrying across the ocean of life and has taken millions of souls to the other shore, beyond all misery. . . . But, today, it may have sprung a leak and got damaged. Through your own fault or whatever cause, it matters not. What would you, who have placed yourselves in it, do? Would you go about cursing it and quarrelling amongst yourselves or would you unite together and put your best efforts to stop the holes? Let us all give our hearts' blood to do it. If we fail in our attempt, let us all sink and die together, with blessings and not curses on our lips." It is not merely an ideal that is preached but one that has been most extensively practised through a network of organisations not only in India but in different countries of the world.

All the noble sentiments recounted in the epical and the scriptural texts of different ages, can be found eloquently manifested in the life and deeds of the great Swami Vivekananda and his heart unburdens the unfathomable depths of his inmost feelings, when he at the top of his voice declared: ¹³

ব্রহ্ম হতে কীট পরমাণু, সর্বভূতে সেই প্রেমময়
মন প্রাণ শরীর অর্পণ কর, সখে, এ সবার পায়।
বহুরূপে সম্মুখে তোমার, ছাড়ি কোথা খুঁজিছ ইশ্বর?
জীব প্রেম করে যেইজন, সেইজন সেবিছে ইশ্বর।
ব্রহ্ম হতে কীট পরমাণু, সর্বভূতে সেই প্রেমময়
মনপ্রাণ শরীর অর্পণ কর, সখে, যে সবার পায়।
বহুরূপে সম্মুখে তোমার, ছাড়ি কোথা খুঁজিছ ইশ্বর?
জীব প্রেম করে যেইজন সেইজন সেবিছে ইশ্বর।

"From highest *Brahman* to the yonder worm
 And to the very minutest Atom,
 Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love ;
 Friend! offer mind, soul, body, at their feet.
 These are His manifold forms before thee,
 Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?
 Who loves all beings, without distinction,
 He indeed is worshipping best his God."

The ideal of Renunciation and Service found its highest expression in Swami Vivekananda, who appeared in fulfilment of the demand of the age after a long interval. It is not only in full consonance with all that has been preached by the Prophets, Saints and Seers of the ancient ages but also marks a new era in the history of India.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Gita*, 18.2.
2. *Ibid.*, 6-22.
3. *Mahanarayanopanishad*, 12-14.
4. *Gita*, 12.12.
5. *Taittiriyaopanishad*, 1-11.
6. *Gita*, 18-5.
7. *Ibid.*, 5.25 & 12.4.
8. C. W., VI, 6th Edn., 504.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
10. *Svetasvataraopanishad*, IV, 3.
11. Letter dated 9.7.1897 to Miss Mary Hale. C. W., V, 7th Edn., p. 136.
12. C. W., Vol. III, 8th Edn., p. 227.
13. C. W., Vol. IV, 7th Edn., p. 496, & *Veeravani* (Beng.), p. 31.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S ETHICS OF RENUNCIATION AND SERVICE

Vivekananda's Ethics of Renunciation and Service is admittedly the product of the past history of India, of her ancient spiritual heritage, but it has, I firmly believe, a great future. It is primarily from this perspective that I do feel inclined to look at Vivekananda's philosophy of life. Vivekananda unequivocally observes that his interest in India is very much different from an Egyptologist's¹ interest in the dead bones of the mummies. With due modification, but with equal force perhaps, this could be said of Vivekananda's Ethics in which lies the future of modern man who by losing his soul in a persistent search for power has opened the veritable Pandora's Box.

An eminent thinker² of our times rightly observed that our moral code must be based not merely on knowledge or love but on both. Knowledge devoid of love, efficiency minus goodness, has been a great menace to man since his history began. But love without knowledge, emotional fervour without rational control, has no less been responsible for vast social disorders. Balanced growth of man depends on a happy synthesis of knowledge and love, of emotion and intellect, of the head and the heart. This gives the substance of modern scientific Ethics whose primary aim is to steer clear of the dogmas of traditional religion on the one hand and of the instinctive selfish urge on the other. In this atomic age when the very existence of man has become a question mark, the aim of scientific Ethics should no longer be a mere synthesis of knowledge and love but of love and power.

Just at the advent of modern science, not long after the Renaissance, Bacon writes in his *Novum Organum*, "Knowledge is power". This seems to be a precise statement of the role of contemporary science. Science is no longer a mere knowledge cult and does not represent a merely objective and impartial approach to facts as it originally did. The watchword of science today is not knowledge but power. It is not scientific knowledge but its counterpart, technology, that shapes the destiny of man today. When in

the sixteenth or, more precisely, the seventeenth century modern science embarked upon its career, it was primarily an instrument of knowledge and secondarily of action. Today the power-aspect of science has got the better of its knowledge-aspect, so much so that at the moment at least science minus technology is as good as cipher.

When Copernicus and Galileo in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries disputed the validity of the geocentric theory, their primary aim was not to give more power but fresh knowledge. Even when in 1871 Darwin in his *Descent of Man* traced the remote ancestry of man to the ape, his aim was to give knowledge and not power. Such discoveries of science meant not so much a call to action as a revolt against the dogmas of religion, more precisely, of the Christian Church. The flat earth versus the round earth, the geocentric versus the heliocentric theories of the relation of the earth and the sun and the demon theory versus the germ theory of many foul diseases may be cited as examples of this conflict.

It cannot be gainsaid however that during its early history, it was science which tried hard to keep pace with traditional religion. With a view to escaping the anathema of the Church in which effort he did not succeed much, Copernicus gave expression to his heliocentric theory with great caution and hesitancy. Galileo's assurance to the Church that he would not again pronounce the said theory is much too well known to deserve elaborate mention. Gradually however it is science that became the most potent factor shaping the destiny of man and traditional religion considerably lost its hold on him. Thanks to the persistent efforts of science, the demon of superstition shows little or no sign of revival but the almost infinitely more ferocious demon of power which man has as the great gift of science is out to devour him.

Today even the knowledge-aspect of science with which traditional religion came into conflict is unable to hold its own against its power-aspect. The paramount question of Ethics today is not a harmony of knowledge and love as it was during the last four centuries but of love and power, of the urge to unite and the urge to dominate. The problem of modern man, as an eminent fiction-writer of our times has aptly put it in the mouth of a rustic, is that he has been taught "how to fly

in the air like birds and to swim in water like the fishes" but not "how to live on earth".

In industrially developed countries, at least among the intelligentsia, there is a preference for scientific theories and not much love is visible for traditional religious beliefs. In the elimination of his prejudices and superstitions, science has been of immense help to man. But the plight of modern man is that science has taught him how to control nature but not his own self. He must therefore "know to live and not merely live to know". In its unqualified emphasis on the philosophy of the unity of man from which Vivekananda's Ethics of renunciation and service follows, lies an answer to this basic question which can satisfy the spiritual cravings of modern man consistently with his scientific yearnings, for, as Romain Rolland rightly puts it, "of all modern men" he "achieved the highest measures of equilibrium between the diverse forces of thought and was the first to sign a treaty of peace between the two forces eternally warring within us: the forces of reason and faith".³ It is from this angle and on this background of world-significance that I would like to take a bird's-eye view of Vivekananda's Ethics.

Vivekananda's Ethics, as has already been pointed out, hinges on two basic concepts: renunciation and service. The first means giving the go-by to the normal selfish urge, to cut asunder the knots of the heart as an *Upanishad* puts it,⁴ the second the new unselfish outlook, the outlook of love that follows from the first. Viewed rightly, they are basically one and are the inseparable aspects of an identical outlook of life. To quote Vivekananda's phrase in another context, they are "the convex and the concave surfaces of the same coin". It would be more in conformity with the spirit of Vivekananda's Ethics, if we were to speak not of renunciation and service but of renunciation-service. As far as I can understand, renunciation by itself does not constitute the goal of Vivekananda's Ethics. It should and must be followed by pervasive love and service. Renunciation thus opens the door to true greatness; it is its 'open sesame', to quote the familiar phrase of the *Arabian Nights*, but not its last word. To be significant in the fullest sense, renunciation must culminate in love and service. This is why they should be assessed not in their isolation but in their union.

The conjunction 'and' placed in between them is a specimen of linguistic inaccuracy which we must willy-nilly bear with. Possibly it is the inevitable product of a long-standing spiritualist tradition. A parallel may be found in the separation of space and time in physics before Einstein merged them into one basic stuff. The point I have been trying to labour is that according to Vivekananda service without renunciation is as artificial as renunciation without service. Such a one-sided emphasis rotates round the small self and lacks breadth of vision, and insight into the deeper dimensions of reality in which our world of sense, of 'claims and counter-claims', as Bosanquet calls it, is rooted.

Prima facie, renunciation might appear as a negative outlook of life not suited to the prevailing temper of our times. Its Sanskrit equivalent, *tyaga*, which means 'giving up', 'to abandon', seems to lend support to such an idea. But nevertheless this is not really the case. If we go deep into the essence of renunciation, we find that almost invariably it has a positive background. It is an almost universally accepted truth that to get something great, we must give up the small. Our instinctive attachment for the small is so great, that in most cases we are unable to give it up for the sake of greatness. This is why greatness is difficult to achieve and there is no royal road to it. In any case, it has a high price and it could be achieved only by following the maxim: "Arise, Awake and Stop not till the goal is reached". Viewed rightly, renunciation is not a merely spiritual concept in the narrow sense of the word. It has in fact a much wider meaning and significance. It sums up the road to greatness and distinction in all the walks of life, in all its spheres.

Nevertheless, renunciation as a spiritual concept has often enough been painted as a negative gospel. It has also been traced to a biased and prejudiced view of life and its basic needs. Let us cite Buddha as a glaring example. Modern man's admiration for his humanism is almost unlimited but he could hardly be accused of much partiality for Buddha's call to renunciation which leads to *Nirvana* or extinction of desires as it is commonly understood. In their apathy for renunciation, some even look upon Buddha's renunciation of worldly ties as an act of cruelty to his near and dear ones. Without attaching much importance to such criticisms of

renunciation as a spiritual gospel, it may be observed quite legitimately perhaps that it is no other than the logical corollary and counterpart of the ordinary idea of self-sacrifice without which greatness and distinction in any shape does not seem to be feasible.

The idea behind renunciation as a spiritual concept is that the world we live in is trivial and insignificant in comparison with the reality in which it is rooted. Two significant expressions for this ineffable reality: *Brahma* and *Bhuma*, we come across in the Upanishads. They convey the same idea. They mean the incomparably great. Both Sankara and Ramanuja, notwithstanding their widely divergent philosophical outlook, mean by *Brahma*, *Vrihat*, the superlatively great, the Infinite as it is called, and trace it to the root *brimha* from which the word *vrihat* is derived.

Chhandogya, one of the oldest of the Upanishads, describes this basic reality as *Bhuma* and means by it the superlatively great. In its heart-touching dialogue between Narada and Sanat Kumar,⁵ the latter elaborates at length the concept of reality as the highest value and points out unmistakably its unimaginable greatness in comparison with the world of small joys and sorrows, small achievements and failures, small conflicts and frustrations in which luckily or unluckily we find ourselves and to which we stick with 'great tenacity'⁶ as Vivekananda puts it. It brings out the positive background of renunciation with a clarity and force all its own when it says:

"Verily that which is superlatively great is the abode of happiness and not that which is small."⁷

Some philosophers with a spiritual bias call this attitude of life rigorism so as to imply that it not only traverses an unnecessarily difficult path for spiritual growth but also takes away from the joy of life. This has been the average criticism of traditional Indian concept of renunciation and, its counterpart, Christian Ethics, whose affinity with Kant's Ethics of "Categorical Imperative" or "duty for the sake of duty" is more than apparent. It is also feared rightly or wrongly that it kills the potentialities of man and makes him live a dull, drab sort of existence. Such an estimate of the Ethics of renunciation is not justified. If freedom is joy, for some at least, "solitary grandeur and freedom of the soul"⁸, as Nivedita calls it, must be a source of interminable happiness.

Notwithstanding his great fascination for renunciation, Vivekananda has never been a defender of a gloomy sort of existence and never finds a halo of spiritual distinction in a long face. He invariably insists and emphasizes that a close contact with the infinite can only add to joy of life and ensure serenity and peace in the midst of its ups and downs, its ebb and tide. Even the Epicures of old have said very rightly perhaps: if a pleasure is likely to become a source of sorrow it should and must be shunned by those who are wise. Renunciation of small, fleeting pleasures of life for the sake of a durable attitude of happiness and peace is not really rigorism but is a demand of unadulterated common sense pure and simple. Its rampant criticism seems to lend support to the following observation of a modern writer: "Common sense is the most uncommon thing in the world."

The attempt to point renunciation as a negative ideal of life is possibly as old as Buddha. With increase in popularity of idealism of the Hegelian brand in nineteenth century Europe, it got a fresh impetus and I suspect with the decline in its popularity since Karl Marx, it has lost considerable force and is being viewed with suspicion and hatred. Be that as it may, the old advocates of Buddha's idea of *Nirvana* as well as its Hindu critics have spared no efforts to point *Nirvana* as a negative idea of life. *Sunyavada* Buddhism, in which Buddhist philosophy probably reaches its culmination, has been painted as purely negative in implication. It is indeed a happy sign of our times that some scholars of Buddhism have put their finger on the positive content of *Nirvana*. The idea is, perhaps, not altogether new either. Notwithstanding Buddha's studied silence on Metaphysics and unqualified abhorrence for barren metaphysical controversies, just in order to fill up the vacuum in a purely ethical code, even in Buddha's behalf a defence of a stable, permanent reality has been made.⁹

A curious defence of the positive aspect of renunciation we come across in Anatole France. There the misguided Abbot of a monastery on the bank of the Nile, who got out of his hut to save the soul of Thais, a beautiful actress of Alexandria, exclaimed at the sight of a brother monk on his way, mistaking him to be a Christian:

"Then you are like me, poor, chaste and solitary. And you are not so—as I am—for the love of god, and with a hope of celestial happi-

ness! That I cannot understand why are you virtuous if you do not believe in Jesus Christ? Why deprive yourself of the good things of this world if you do not hope to gain eternal riches in heaven?"¹⁰

This is perhaps the idea that drags Immanuel Kant to an artificial reconciliation of duty and happiness in a life to come through a mysterious divine intervention.

This emotional defence of the positive aspect of renunciation could be treated in substance, if not in details, as not much different from the ideal of renunciation in Buddha and Vivekananda, only if the reference to the glamour of the hereafter could be got rid of and the bliss of heaven made feasible here and now.

The following quotation from Vivekananda's commentary to his famous *Raja-Yoga* states the positive basis of the idea of renunciation with a clarity and force which speak for itself and hardly need any comment:

"You have to get all this experience, but finish it quickly. We have placed ourselves in this net, and will have to get out, we have got ourselves caught in the trap, and we will have to work out our freedom. So get this experience of husbands and wives, and friends and little loves. You will get through them safely if you never forget what you really are. Never forget that this is only a momentary state, and that we have to pass through it. Experience is the one great teacher—experience of pleasure and pain—but know it is only experience. It leads step by step to that state where all things become small and the *Purusha* so great that the whole universe seems as a drop in the ocean, and falls off by its own nothingness. We have to go through different experiences but let us never forget the ideal!"¹¹

This emphasis on the positive content of renunciation brings into bold relief the other aspect of Vivekananda's Ethics, by far the more important aspect of it, viz. the idea of love and service, more particularly the idea of human service in the broadest sense of the word to which the Ramakrishna Mission founded by him has been striving hard for the last half a century or so to give a concrete shape. In this philosophy of unity which is as much a content of his own realization as of his rich, spiritual heritage, Vivekananda finds the rationale of his Ethics of universal love and service.

In modern European philosophy, we generally come across two attempts to formulate a code of conduct without making it an appendage of a preconceived reality. The first is made by Immanuel Kant, and the second by John Stuart Mill. Kant turns upside down the prevalent idea that our Ethics is a necessary corollary of our metaphysical conception. Being unable to build a scheme of reality on a purely logical foundation, he makes it a corollary of our moral convictions. Speaking plainly, he maintains that it is impossible to live good life without a faith in our own freedom, in the hereafter and in God.

Mill does just the reverse of it. He tries to base his ethics on plain common sense keeping it far from metaphysics in all its implications. He justifies his Ethics of social happiness, utilitarianism as it is called, by a purely psychological approach. He finds in enlightened self-interest the great guarantee for social welfare. When Tom, Dick and Harry by instinct seek their own happiness, it is only sound common sense that they should come to an understanding and seek happiness of all of them. Mill's approach is very simple and he claims to have drawn it from the precept of the great prophet of Nazareth: "Do to others as you wish to be done by", a doctrine which is also traced to Confucius. I do not think there is much that is basically illogical in such an approach as has been pointed out by superficial critics. Its real limitation lies to my mind not in its logical inadequacy but in its practical deficiency.

Vivekananda does not believe with Kant that moral life can make a satisfactory start in a metaphysical vacuum nor does he believe with Mill that self-interest could be the rationale of philanthropy.¹² For him, the great guarantee, the elán of his ethics of love and service is his philosophy of unity whose two inseparable halves as expressed by traditional *Vedanta* since the days of Upanishads are:

**Tattvamasi*, "You are no other than that reality"; and *Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*,† "All that exists is that infinite truth."¹³ If all is one, I must love my neighbour as strongly as I love myself. This is

*तत्त्वमसि ।

†सर्व्वम् खल्विदं ब्रह्म ।

how he defends the old ethical maxim: "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

As a confirmed Vedantist, as a "paragon of Vedantic Missionaries" as William James calls him, above all as a man of vision, the idea of unity of the world has been the ruling passion of his life. This accounts for his incorrigible patriotism and also for his emphatic and eloquent defence of a cultural synthesis of the East and the West more than half a century ago when they looked like two irreconcilables with an unbridgeable gulf between their achievements and aspirations, aptitude and outlook. Herein lies the secret of his great love for the weak, the down-trodden and the exploited. This perhaps explains his great concern and preference for the sinner as distinguished from the saint. With searching insight into his character, Nivedita observes that if Michael the Arch-angel and the worst sinner were present before him, assuredly and without any the least wavering, he would have lent his helping hand to the latter.¹⁴ So unerring was his vision of the basic unity of creation. He could see, to quote Romain Rolland's expressive phrase, "Truth at the bottom of the mountain and error at its top."¹⁵

Perhaps the psychological approach of Mill to the Ethics of social happiness is not altogether unsound and useless. As a counsel of common sense cum prudence, it should carry great weight with the vast multitude of men and women who have no idea whatsoever of the basic unity of the world. But the real difficulty is that in practical work-a-day life Mill's transition from egoism to altruism does not work much. Rather it fails us miserably at the crucial hour.

If John Stuart Mill were alive today and he would have seen with naked eyes how, knowing full well that an atomic or nuclear conflict might wipe off the entire human race, in advanced countries where there is no rarity of enlightened common sense, there is a race in the production of horrible engines of destruction just to compel Ishrafil to blow his flute of destruction a bit earlier. Once we start with the assumption "I first", there could be no safe and dependable transition to "I second", not to speak of "I last of all". The real escape, however difficult it may be, from the dilemma lies in finding "I" in everything and everything in "I", in what Manu of

by-gone ages calls *atma-yajna*, the sacrifice of the Ego-sense and its substitution by a consciousness of an all-pervasive, soothing presence. The first is the recipe of Mill, the second that of Vivekananda. The first is apparently simple but infeasible, the second, though difficult, is feasible.

Vivekananda's reaction to the cult of enlightened common sense is a mixture of praise as well as blame, of appreciation as well as disparagement. Even though he derides it in no uncertain terms, he has some sympathy for it. I would like to quote in this context the following account of a story of Æsop's Fables as described by him in a lecture in London in October, 1896:

"You all remember how in Æsop's Fables a fine stag is looking at his form reflected in a lake, and is saying to his young one, 'How powerful I am, look at my limbs, how strong and muscular they are: and how swiftly I can run.' In the meantime he hears the barking of dogs in the distance, and immediately takes to his heels, and after he has run several miles, he comes back panting. The young one says: 'You just told me how strong you were, and how was it that when the dogs barked, you ran away?' 'Yes, my son, but when the dogs bark all my confidence vanishes.'"

"Such is the case with us. We think highly of humanity, we feel ourselves strong and valiant, we make grand resolves, but when the 'dogs' of trial and temptation bark, we are like the stag in the fable."¹⁶

Yet he strikes a note of optimism to enthuse courage in the weak:

"Then, if such is the case, what is the use of teaching all those things? Where is the greatest use? The use is this, that perseverance will finally conquer. Nothing can be done in a day."¹⁷

Vivekananda's unqualified and unmitigated emphasis on love and service aptly reminds one of Buddha. Buddha said to his disciples, "Go now and wander for the gain of many, for the welfare of many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain and for the welfare of . . . man". Vivekananda was a bit too fond of quoting this inspiring utterance of Buddha and off and on commended it to his disciples. The only difference is that because of his studied silence on metaphysics and its puzzles, Buddha never cared to base this doctrine like Vivekananda on a scheme of reality, far less on a philosophy of unity. But nevertheless Buddha speaks



Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora

of extension of goodwill to all as a form of meditation and calls it *Brahma-Vihara* which literally means dwelling with *Brahma*, an excursion into the realm of Reality. So far as a direct appeal to Reality is concerned, there is almost invariably an "as if" in Buddha's concept of *Brahma-Vihara*. It substantially means and implies that if there is *Brahma*, if there is a pervasive unity of spirit behind the plurality of facts, it is our imperative duty to cultivate and practise goodwill for all. Willy-nilly, Buddha does not like to introduce an all-pervasive Reality into his philosophy of life. In the *Tevijja Sutta* he compares the teachers who talk about *Brahma* with a man who has fallen in love with a lady without knowing her, who builds a staircase without knowing where the palace is to be, and likes to cross a river, not by a ferry, but by calling the other side to come to him.

The long and short of it all is that Buddha is not prepared to make room for a philosophy of unity in his code of morality. But his unqualified emphasis on service to man, more precisely to all living beings, his prayer for their welfare: * "*Sabbe satta sukhita hantu*—"let all living beings be happy", is logically quite consistent and compatible with the notion of unity in *Vedanta* of which Vivekananda is the most eloquent exponent of our times. If such a reading stands to reason, as I believe it does, Yajñavalkya's dictum, "all things are loved, not for their own sake, but for the sake of the reality that lies behind", as expounded in *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad*¹⁸ cannot perhaps be disputed.

Resemblance of Vivekananda's notion of service with Buddha's philosophy of life is indeed much greater and more striking in Mahayana Buddhism whose conception of Bodhisattva, who refused to be liberated till all living beings are liberated, exerted great influence on him. As a matter of fact, when Ramakrishna, his "Seraphic Master", exhorted him in his early spiritual career to eschew the irresistible charm of the consciousness of identity with the Absolute for the sake of suffering humanity, he possibly got his first lesson in this type of philanthropy which constitutes admittedly the keynote, if not the burden, of his teachings. Probably, Buddha's gigantic heart dexterously engrafted on the notion of a pervasive

* सत्त्वे सत्ता सुखिता हन्तु ।

spiritual unity in traditional *Vedanta* sums up Vivekananda's ethics of service of which renunciation is rightly viewed and understood as the preparatory stage, as the means. Vivekananda's clarion call to his disciples to forego the joy of freedom from bondage for the sake of teeming millions, steeped in ignorance and his unfailing determination to suffer the torments of hell, times without number, if thereby he could relieve the sufferings of common man and help him come out of the cave of ignorance, is an echo of what Buddha pronounced to humanity ages before: "Blessed indeed is the man who renounces the world for the sake of *Nirvana*, but more blessed is the man who sacrifices *Nirvana* for the sake of humanity." Possibly, in thus depicting Buddha's ideal Edwin Arnold has made use of the brush of Mahayana Buddhism. In one word, in Buddha as well as in Vivekananda renunciation gets the better of a selfish outlook, and service, the better of a renunciation that wants to simply fly away from the world in search of peace. The following utterance in the *Nagananda*, a Sanskrit play of the seventh century which exhibits considerable Buddhist influence, emphasizes with apparent clarity and force the superiority of service over the mendicant's life solely given to contemplation: "A hermit is no doubt happy in the forest—with meadow for his bed, the cool water cascade for his drink, roots for his food and the deer for his companion. Yet there is one drawback in such a life. Being all lonely, it gives no scope for helping fellowmen and is therefore led to no purpose."¹⁹

Notwithstanding the sublimity and greatness of Vivekananda's ethics on the one hand and its utility and need for suffering humanity on the other, it cannot be gainsaid that the path he prescribes is nevertheless difficult. Taking the cue from a saying of an *Upanishad*,²⁰ he observes that the road to Reality is sharp like the edge of a razor and those alone succeed in the struggle who have the courage to face difficulty without being unnerved.

Naturally enough, we come across in the contemporary world certain substitutes for this hazardous approach. It will be worth while to consider them in order to assess their similarity with and difference from the essentials of Vivekananda's philosophy of life. First, since Hegel formulated in the nineteenth century his philosophical idealism, it has been assumed in certain quarters with a spiritual bias that for the sake of realiza-

tion of truth and for achieving greatness, renunciation of the worldly life is not needed. In fact, it is taken for granted that such an outlook of life and such an approach to its problems is superfluous. If the whole world is permeated with God and if all human beings are his veritable images, it is, they say, foolish to give up the world and live in seclusion from it.

To me it appears that Vivekananda has not much to say either for or against such a reading of the life of the recluse. Notwithstanding his unqualified fascination for formal renunciation, *sannyasa* as it is called, he has given a much wider connotation to it, than is generally found in the traditional religious literature concerned. He was never for a compromise of principles, for lowering down the ideal. This is why he systematically pleads that the sanctity of the great ideal of formal *sannyasa* should be scrupulously and jealously maintained and it must be reserved for the select few who are fit to profess and practise it. His great admiration for Buddha and Christ notwithstanding, he does not hesitate to maintain that their unqualified emphasis on renunciation caused great havoc in the life of the common man and led him to perpetual frustration. He does not like that those who are not fit for the life of the recluse should brood too much over it and suffer from what he calls in his *Karma Yoga* 'self-disapproval'.²¹ Can we call it inferiority complex?

But that is no reason why the ideal of renunciation should be dispensed with. Even formal *sannyasa* is quite welcome; because as in other walks of life, form has its importance in a spiritual career too. But nevertheless we must remember that it is not the form but the spirit that ultimately counts. If the spirit is lacking, the form becomes invariably a bondage. But if the spirit is there, even without the form, the highest altitude of greatness could be reached. In his illuminating talk on the career of the householder and the recluse entitled, *Each Is Great in His Own Place* in his *Karma Yoga*, he concludes without any equivocation and hesitancy that both the householder and the recluse can afford to be equally great.²² His final emphasis is not on the outward form or the status but on the life that is lived and the character that is expressed through it. Possibly this is why he wants to underwrite 'Renunciation' and *Mukti*, the two concepts that dominated Indian philosophy and spiritual discipline through ages since

Buddha downwards, if not earlier, and strives hard to find their substitute in character²³, so that the much neglected man of the world may find in him inspiration for a better life and better existence. Possibly due to his unerring and unfailing vision of unity in the midst of diversities of life, he could not brook much the introduction of a water-tight compartment between the secular and the non-secular, the material and the spiritual, the cloister and the hearth. Naturally enough, in the achievement of all greatness and distinction he detects the touch of renunciation and of *tapasya* and find their synonym in absorption and concentration.

But nevertheless he was not altogether oblivious of the danger that lies in a superficial elimination of the barrier between the spiritual and the material. He therefore takes his stand on a statistical average and maintains that the life of a recluse, if not immoral, is much superior to that of an ordinary householder. Being occasionally enamoured of the life of a *sannyasin* he goes the length of comparing a householder with a firefly, and the *sannyasin* with the effulgent sun.²⁴ Possibly in his emphasis on spirit as well as the form, more precisely in a balanced adjustment of their apparently conflicting claims and also in his emphasis on character as the *sine qua non* of greatness, he was influenced by his great Master Ramakrishna, who was a happy blend of an ideal householder and an ideal *sannyasin*, of Platonic love in flesh and blood, a class by himself.

Nevertheless, he was no friend of those who could not tolerate renunciation as an ideal and tried to bring down its importance. When Justice Ranade, for example, in the name of his "varied experience theory" castigated *sannyasa* as an ideal of life, he found in Vivekananda his most uncompromising adversary and most unsympathetic critic. Yet it is perhaps difficult to come across a spiritual leader of his eminence and standing who is more sympathetic to the common man, more eager to help him in spite of all the weaknesses of the flesh.

The next significant fact to reckon with in the present context is perhaps contemporary psychology, more precisely, Freudian psychology. Vivekananda has great faith in *brahmacharyya* or self-control in a physical sense. Possibly this is what Nivedita wants to make out when she says that "the very fact of unmarriedness counted with him as a spiritual asset."²⁵

On the contrary, Freud strives hard to point out that sexual instinct is the only instinct in man and all his behaviours from infancy to old age are controlled and dominated by it. In a legitimate expression of this instinct, in the proper satisfaction and adjustment of what he calls, taking his cue from ancient Greek Mythology, 'Oedipus Complex', Freud visualizes the future of man. It has already been pointed out that Vivekananda was never in favour of artificial self-control, for 'repression'. In fact, he was quite aware of the distinction drawn by the Freudians between 'repression' and 'sublimation'. He defines *bhakti* or Divine love as a sublimation of the natural attachment for the things of the world. In support of this thesis, he appeals to the *Bhagavata Purana* where the great mythical devotee Prahlada prays to God not to kill his natural instincts, but to give him the capacity to canalise them in the service of God. This also shows that the idea of 'sublimation' as a spiritual concept was known to the *Bhakti* cult in India in the Puranic age. Though Vivekananda believes in sublimation of instincts, he also believes that there could and should be natural self-control not in a merely spiritual but also in a physical sense.

With him, perfect renunciation is impossible without this. Naturally enough, he puts the highest possible premium on it in spiritual achievement. With him, as also with the traditional advocate of spiritualism in ancient and medieval India, a spiritual venture minus *brahmacharyya* is a risky experiment. Judged from this angle, he is poles asunder from Freud.

I believe, with the passage of time contemporary psychology will be able to probe deeper into the layers of the Unconscious and be able to find out the utility of *brahmacharyya* in all idealist ventures of man. It will suffice, I presume, if I conclude this sketchy survey of Freudian Psychology *vis-a-vis* Vivekananda's Ethics with the following observations of Romain Rolland: "I advise the 'extrovert' people of the West to rediscover in the depths of themselves the same sources of active and creative 'introversion'. If they fail, there is not much hope for the future. Their gigantic technical knowledge, far from being a source of protection, will bring about their annihilation."²⁶

Vivekananda's Ethics of renunciation and service will, I firmly believe and hope, come to grip with the greatest anti-religious force of our times.

I have in mind Dialectical Materialism, and its political and economic counterpart, Communism. Unlike many other so-called spiritual forces of our times, it can without much difficulty accommodate within it the substance of a dignified materialistic approach to the problem of life.

Vivekananda has not much respect for official organized religion and he is one of the few deeply religious persons in human history who has the courage to appreciate an atheist in unmitigated terms only if he has character. He finds the future of man not in the so-called wrangles of official religion but in the "Universal Science Religion", as Romain Rolland calls it, in a synthesis of *Vedanta* and modern science. This leaves some scope for dignified materialism.

As a philosopher Vivekananda does not draw a clear-cut line of demarcation between matter and spirit. He has repeatedly asserted in no uncertain terms that matter and spirit are but the same reality viewed from two distinct but compatible angles. Speaking philosophically, if matter be appearance and spirit reality, for Vivekananda at least, appearance and reality are basically one, just as the sun and his rays are substantially the same.²⁷ He never minimizes the importance of the material needs of the common man. With apostolic fervour, he asserts that if God were not capable of giving a morsel of bread to the hungry and to wipe off the tears of a widow, he does not deserve to be worshipped. As he was quite alive to the material needs of the exploited and the down-trodden, not only in his own country but all the world over, he has tried to infuse with utmost vigour a sense of spiritual sanctity in mundane duties and mundane affairs that matter most in the life of the common man. This is why his enunciation of *Karma Yoga* appeals most to the industrialized West which cannot help seek its spiritual salvation more in incessant action than in calmness of contemplation. Very naturally indeed as a representative mind of the West, Romain Rolland, rightly observes: "Of the four Gospels of Vivekananda—his four Yogas—I find the most deep and moving tone in his Gospel of Work—KarmaYoga."²⁸

Vivekananda throws further light on the synthesis of matter and spirit, of the material and spiritual needs of the average man in his important brochure in Bengali on a Philosophy of History of India from the Vedic

age down to his own time. Almost like the advocates of communism he shows how the next phase of history in India and the world at large will be characterized by the rise of the much-neglected Shudras, the labour as they are called. This implies that economic and material values will in this age of rapid industrial growth and technological advance play an important role in the life of the masses and wealth, the great arbiter of the fate of the common man, will and must cease to be the possession of the privileged few. In laying thus the foundation of a classless society, he does not ignore the importance of spiritual values in collective life. With the aim of achieving a measure of equilibrium between matter and spirit, he pleads with great force for the transformation of Shudras into Brahmanas. Of course, from his perspective, Brahmanas do not represent a caste, Brahman-Bandhus or hereditary Brahmins as *Chhandogya*²⁹ aptly describes them, but an ideal, a keen sense of spiritual values, and this is what he wants to engraft on the heart of modern labour almost solely given to the satisfaction of his material needs in the persistent hurry and stress of an industrial set-up. Thus, Vivekananda's ideal of service has a world-significance in an intense sense inasmuch as within its purview fall the vast multitude of modern man and woman.

It will not be quite unfair to suggest with profound and deep-felt homage that at times in his eagerness to help the common man out of his plight, out of his accumulated miseries and weaknesses, he seems to have gone far enough to accommodate Nietzsche's concept of "Superman" and the accompanying "will to power" within the framework of the Vedantic ethics of Love, Freedom and Strength. I do not know whether he read *Thus Spake Zarathustra* of Nietzsche who was a contemporary of his. Possibly he did not. But it is apparent that he has considerably enlivened *Vedanta* philosophy of abstract logic and ratiocination in two opposite directions. First, he makes it a message of the heart instead of the head. Here he is wide off from Nietzsche. Secondly, he makes it a message of action. Here he gets the better of both the head and the heart. Here his similarity with Nietzsche, however superficial and limited it may be, cannot be disputed altogether.

In order to rouse just a bit of manliness in those who have become, under

the pressure of an unjust, uneven, and also cruel society, "next door neighbour to brutes", in his expressive phrase, almost inert like trees and plants, though himself a saint of saints, he praises 'Sin' and calls it 'blessed',³⁰ provided it can give them a sense of strength and power. Paradoxically enough he says: "Be wicked if you must, on a great scale".³¹ All this shows that he was always eager to help men at any cost, to err on the right side only if he could thereby help those who badly need help.

There was, I believe, one great safeguard in such apparently dangerous ventures for human welfare. He has always an insight into the ultimate ideal of life, the basic unity of man. Even during his early excursions into the realm of spirit, he said to Swami Saradananda, a brother disciple of his, that due to his contact with Ramakrishna he found that the ultimate objective of life is "not to idealise the real but to realise the ideal".³² I personally feel this is nothing but the awareness of the "divinity of man" on which, off and on, in season and out of season, he does not hesitate to put his finger. This unshakable faith has led him to hold that "man does not travel from error to truth, but from a lower truth to a higher truth". He has therefore no hesitation in summing up his Philosophy of History thus: "Truth does not pay homage to any society ancient or modern, society has to pay homage to it or die." Possibly it will be a boon to suffering humanity if the truth of this dictum could be driven home in the sphere of human relation in our times, more particularly in the sphere of international politics.

The following extract from his inspiring speeches may throw further light on the hidden implication of his apparently Nietzschean leanings:

"Never for a moment forget the glory of human nature! We are the greatest God that ever was or ever will be Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless ocean which I am."³³

Such an assurance of security and peace has a parallel, I believe, in Al-Mansur the Sufi who with the words *Anal Huq*—"I am the Truth"—on his lips faced death cheerfully. Vivekananda found his counterpart in that giant of a saint whom they killed during the Mutiny, who broke his silence when stabbed to the heart to say "Thou art He!"³⁴

It may be worth while to quote two more passages on the same theme:

"In practical daily life, we are hurt by small things ; we are enslaved

by little beings. Misery comes because we think we are finite—we are little beings In the midst of all these miseries and troubles, when a little thing may throw me off my balance, it must be my care to believe that I am infinite. And the fact is that we are, and that consciously or unconsciously we are all searching after that something which is infinite ; we are always seeking for something that is free³⁵

“ That is the remedy for all disease, the nectar that cures death. Here we are in this world and our nature rebels against it. But let me repeat: ‘I am it ; I am it’. ‘I have no fear, no doubt nor death’ However much the body rebels, however much the mind rebels, in the midst of the uttermost darkness, in the midst of agonising tortures, in the uttermost despair, repeat this once, twice, thrice, ever more. Light comes gently, slowly, but surely it comes.”³⁶

This gives in a nutshell the idea of “the divinity of man” that forms the bed-rock of Vivekananda’s Ethics of renunciation and service, his escape from the aberrations of Nietzsche. His writings are in fact much too full of such inspiring passages. They have already become part of the classics of the condensed spiritual wisdom of the human race. I have picked up only a fragment of what gave me perpetual inspiration in the midst of hardships and toils of the last four decades, ever since I came into contact in my earlier years with the soul-stirring message of Vivekananda. But personal reference apart, they have a universal appeal. Therein lies their great significance, their sublimity and grandeur. I have no doubt that Vivekananda’s message will not fail man at this critical hour of history. To the contrary, it will assure for him a better world and a better existence.

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30. C. W., Vol. IV, p. 320.
31. Nivedita, *The Master as I Saw Him*, p. 170.
32. Saradananda, *Biography of Ramkrishna in Bengali*, p. IV, p. 141.
33. *Vivekananda*, In an interview at the Thousand Island Park, U.S.A.
34. Nivedita, *The Master as I Saw Him*, p. 330.
35. C. W., Vol. II, p. 397.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 400-401.

SOCIOLOGICAL VIEWS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, AND HIS IDEALS OF SOCIAL REFORMS—UPLIFT OF WOMEN AND MASSES

I

Sociological Views of Swamiji

(1) INDIAN SPIRITUALISM

A very special feature of our age-old Indian culture and civilisation is that it always tries to penetrate through the outer crusts and reach to the very core, the real centre behind. The most passionate desire of each and every Indian, as well known, is for Unity, Universality, Oneness. This has, undoubtedly, been the ultimate desire of all scientists and, more so, of all philosophers, all over the world, throughout the ages. Science, as is well known, aims at reducing the apparent Chaos all around to a Cosmos by discovering common features, unifying particulars under universals, bringing lower principles under higher, till the highest is reached. And, what does Philosophy do? It does more, carries on this investigation into unity much further by bringing all the separate, unified studies, all the Sciences, all the Arts under a common fold, under a common banner, under a common principle. All this is, undoubtedly, true.

But still, it is no exaggeration to say that this search for unity has never been so intense, so central, so one-pointedly followed; and the result, so sublimely reached; and finally, what is most significant, the principle so scrupulously, so magnificently, so joyously lived, as in India.

And, what, really, is the result of such a life-long search? What has India discovered as *the* Principle of Life; as the one, universal, all-embracing Law; as the most fundamental, central, basic Truth? That is the simplest, yet the most profound of all principles, all laws, all truths, viz. the principle, law or truth of *Atman*, the Self. Is there no God above? That, too, is *Atman*. Is there no world below? That, too, is *Atman*. Hence, the only

Indian aim of life is *Atmopalabधि*, Self-realisation, or the realisation of the Self in any and everything, in the body and the mind, in the Heaven and the earth, in God Himself. That is why the most central study for the Indians is, unanimously: *Moksa-Shastra*, Doctrine of Salvation. How to get *Moksa* or Salvation, or freedom from ignorance (*ajnana*) regarding one's own real nature, and the consequent selfish acts (*sakama-karmas*)—that is the one question for all Indians alike. Hence it is that in India, all other studies—Literature, Science, Arts, Economics, Politics, Sociology, even Sexology and the like,—have always been taken to be parts and parcels of this central study. Hence it is that it is manifestly wrong to try vainly to trace one of the modern '*isms*' in our Indian views of any kind (pp. 358, 361 & 362). The apparent '*isms*' may be there; but with an entirely different basis. The only basis of any '*ism*' here is Spiritualism,—nothing more, nothing less.

And, what does *Spiritualism* mean in India from time immemorial? It means, in the most literal sense, "the Doctrine of the *Spirit*"—Spirit, Spirit, and nothing else but Spirit! Thus, the Spirit, the Soul, the Self is the most central fact, the most fundamental basis, the most sublime essence of our age-old Indian culture. Where was it, except in India, that the most profound question was asked boldly, eagerly, lovingly right at the very dawn of human civilisation?

*Ko na atma kim Brahmeti**

"Who is our Self? Who is *Brahman*?"

Where was it, except in India, that the most sublime reply was given unhesitatingly, unflinchingly, unequivocally right at the very dawn of human civilisation?

Ayam atma Brahman†

Sarvam Khalvidam Brahman‡

"This Self is *Brahman*".

"All this, verily, is *Brahman*".

* को न आत्मा किम् ब्रह्मेति—(Chhandogya Upanishad, 5.11.1.)

† अयमात्मा ब्रह्म—(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.4.4)

‡ सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म—(Chhandogya Upanishad, 3.14.1)

Where was it, except in India, that the most enchanting Song of Unity was sung unanimously, gratefully, blissfully at the very dawn of human civilisation?

*“Tatra ko mohah kah sokah
Ekatvamanupasyatah”§*

“Where is delusion, where is grief, for one who sees Oneness?”

In this way, the one fact of India, the one basis of India, the one essence of India is Oneness, Unity of Existence, Universality of Spirit.

(2) SWAMIJI'S SPIRITUALISTIC SOCIALISM

Swami Vivekananda, too, was an Indian, to the core, in the truest sense of the term. Who is a true Indian? A true Indian is one who is not only born in India, but feels one with her, represents her culture and civilisation, life and soul, glory and beauty in a living, loving, lovable form. Our beloved Swamiji was one such man, one such incomparable man. What an intense love, what an infinite devotion, what an incomparable enthusiasm for her! Listen to his thundering voice, echoed and re-echoed repeatedly, with unflinching patience and courage, all throughout his numerous speeches and writings:—

“If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed *Punya-bhumi* (holy land), to be the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for Karma, the land to which every soul that is wending its way to Godward, must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and of spirituality—it is India.”

“This is the mother-land of Philosophy, of spirituality, and of Ethics, of sweetness, gentleness and love. These still exist, and my experiences of the world lead me to stand on firm ground and make the bold statement, that India is still the first and foremost of all the nations of the world in these respects.”

§ तत्र को मोहः कः शोकः एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ।—(Isa Upanishad, 8)

"Here in this blessed land, the foundation and backbone, the life-centre is Religion and Religion alone. Let others talk of Politics, of the glory of acquisition of immense wealth poured in by trade, of the power of commercialism, of the glorious fountain of physical liberty, but these the Hindu Mind does not understand, and does not want to understand."

"In India, religious life forms the centre, the key-note of the whole music of national life."

"This is the land. I am one of the proudest men ever born, but let me tell you frankly, it is not for myself, but on account of my ancestry."¹

And, we are also proud, proud and grateful, that in those dark and distressed days of prejudice and wrong representation, he carried the real message of India across the oceans, to America and to Europe.

Thus, Swami Vivekananda's Socialism is not an ordinary one, but it is Spiritualism through and through. Swamiji himself indicates this clearly thus:—

"So, in India, social reform has to be preached by showing how much more spiritual a life the new system will bring; and Politics has to be preached by showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants—its spirituality. Every man has to make his own choice; so has every nation."^{1a}

(3) WHAT IS SOCIETY?

The first question of Sociology is regarding the nature, origin, and utility of Society. Is Society a natural something, or only an artificial growth? Is it something internal, or merely an external super-imposition? Does it spring from love, or from fear? Is it based on virtue or only on 'prudence'? Does it serve individuals, or do individuals serve it? These, and numerous other such questions naturally crop up here.

And the answers? The answers are also varied and all possible views have been held. What is the Indian view? The Indian view, as usual, is based on that one and fundamental principle of India, viz. Spiritualism. Hence, the Indian view is that Society is an eternal something, being ordained and created by God Himself.

(4) INDIAN DOCTRINE OF CREATION

Indeed the Indian view of creation is a peculiar, and, may we say, a fine one. If we accept the Indian Monotheistic Doctrine of Creation,—which all the Schools do, not excluding even the strictly monistic ones from the empirical point of view—then we have also to accept the view that the universe of souls and matter is a Cosmos, not a Chaos ; and not only that, but an entirely teleological or a purposive one.

And, what is that purpose? That is also, one and only one—viz. a spiritual one. The only purpose of an Indian is “Salvation”, *Moksa* or *Mukti*. Salvation from what? Salvation from *Avidya* and *Duhkha*, ignorance and the pains and sufferings due to it.

(5) THE LAW OF KARMA

Here steps in the great and fundamental Doctrine of Law of Karma: *Karma-Vada*, the very prop of our age-old Indian culture and civilisation. What does it imply? It implies that every *Karma*, every voluntary action, done with a selfish motive, must produce its appropriate *Phala* or result, and that the *Karma-Karta* or the agent must invariably experience the same. “As you sow, so you reap”. Experience you must. Or, all the canons of justice will be totally violated. For, if the agent himself voluntarily does anything, without any compulsion of any sort, and after due rational, free deliberation, then he must be held fully responsible for his own voluntary or free, rational action, done with a selfish end in view. Such acts are called *sakama-karmas* or selfish acts ; and the agent being fully responsible for the same, must, of necessity, face the consequence thereof, and experience their results, called *karma-phalas*. That is the unavoidable demand of justice.

But if in the same birth, all the numerous *sakama-karmas* do not get appropriate opportunities for producing their appropriate results, then? Can, then, the agent be allowed to escape the just consequences of his own *sakama-karmas*? Can death put an end suddenly to the claims of justice? No, that cannot be, can never be. So according to the

Law of Karma, which is also a Law of Justice, the *Jiva* or the soul has to be born again to experience the results of its *sakama-karmas*, not experienced before.

(6) THE DOCTRINE OF BIRTHS AND RE-BIRTHS

In this way, *Karma-Vada* or Doctrine of Karma leads to *Janma-Janmantara-Vada*, or the Doctrine of Births and Re-births,—another fundamental Indian doctrine,—as a necessary corollary.

But do all difficulties end here? No, evidently, not. For, in this new birth or life, the *Jiva* or the soul not only experiences the results of its past *sakama-karmas*, but also, as very natural, performs many new *sakama-karmas* the consequences of which cannot, as before, be experienced in that birth; so the *Jiva* has to be born again; this goes on and on. And, this is called the *Anadi-Samsara-Cakra*, the beginningless wheel of trans-migratory or worldly existence.

But is it endless, too? What hope, then, there is for *Mukti*, Salvation? According to our Indian view, it is not endless, and there is every hope for *Mukti* or Salvation. For, if in a new birth the *Jiva* or the soul is wise enough to perform the new *karmas*, not in a *sakama*, but wholly in a *niskama* spirit, then, the results of such *niskama-karmas* need not be experienced by the *Jiva*, and through *sadhanas* or spiritual means, when the results of all its past *sakama-karmas* are fully experienced, it can attain *Mukti* or Salvation. Thus, the *Samsara-Cakra* or the wheel of earthly existence, is *anadi* or beginningless, no doubt; but, by no means, *ananta* or endless; and everything, depends on the *Jiva* itself. If it, in ignorance and selfishness, performs *sakama-karmas*, then, according to the Law of Karma, as explained above, it is doomed to *Samsara* only, to worldly life only, with all its infinite pains and sufferings, sins and evils, impurities and imperfections. But if it, in wisdom and detachment, performs *niskama-karmas*, follows the spiritual path, then who can prevent it from getting *Moksa*, a Life Beautiful, a Life Blessed, a Life Blissful?

Such is the great and grand Indian view of creation and of the created

universe. According to it the world, of course, is finally rejectible ; and *Moksa*, the only end of human life, means emancipation from this painful, impure, imperfect worldly existence. Still, this world has a great spiritual value also. For here, the *Buddha-Jiva*, the soul in bondage, is given opportunities to get rid of its past *sakama-karmas*, and make itself fit for a higher state, viz. *Moksa*.

The Indian view is that, every soul is divine, and *Moksa* means only the realisation of this eternal divinity. Also, every soul *must* be free, *must* realise its own divine nature, one day or other. So, give it opportunities, infinite opportunities to do so ; let it not die, end ingloriously as an impure, imperfect, selfish, sorrowing being ; condemn it not for that to eternal hell ; but only give it opportunities, infinite opportunities ; let it come back, back and back, till the great goal is reached. Hence it is that the world is taken to be an arena of spiritual striving and spiritual progress.

(7) INDIAN VIEW OF SOCIETY

And so is Society. An individual soul is born in a particular society, according to its past *karmas*, to work out its own destiny here. In this sense, society is not a human creation, but a Divine Institution, created by God Himself, according to the past *sakama-karmas* of the *Jivas* themselves.

Look at Nature outside. Do you not see a wonderful order everywhere, a magnificent, loving connection all around ? The sun rises, the moon sets, the stars smile, the wind blows, the river flows, the blossom blooms in what a loving unison, in what a perfect order ! The same, according to the Indian view, is the state of affairs in Society inside, no less. It, too, is a perfect system, a full organic whole, a loving and a living union, a unity-in-difference, yet, ultimately, a union, a whole, a system. Its basis is Religion ; its purpose, Spiritualism ; its instruments, Scriptural Injunctions. It is not a political organisation, not an economic unit, not a prudential concern at all. Hence, it is that in India, political power, economic superiority or prudential cunning has never been taken as forming the

foundation of society. The sole, the whole force, the whole sanction, the whole cementing power behind society is one and only one, as mentioned above, viz. Religion, Spiritualism, Other-worldliness. Society must, of course, provide for economic well-being and physical comforts. But the final aim, as everywhere else, is the development and perfection of the soul—whatever it may mean.

As we have seen (p. 353), according to the *Vedanta*,—which may, unhesitatingly, be taken to be the voice of Indian philosophers—there is really no question of the soul's development or perfection. For, the soul, as *Brahman*, the Absolute, God Himself, is ever-developed, ever-perfect. So, there is only a question of *manifestation* of the real nature, the ever-perfect nature, the divine nature of the soul. Whatever be the case, according to our Indian view, society is a necessary stage in the inevitable flight of the soul towards self-realisation and self-manifestation; and never, a mere arena for living a worldly life of selfish desires and low impulses.

This is the real, eternal, transcendental side of society, its innermost core, eternal essence, never-failing background. But, there is also a practical, empirical, ordinary day-to-day side; and this side changes, this side needs improvement, this side, too, must be brought under the suzerainty of the first; that is, in the midst of all daily injunctions regarding eating and drinking and moving and what not, it must keep its spirituality intact, under all circumstances whatsoever.

(8) SWAMIJI'S VIEW REGARDING THE ORIGIN OF SOCIETY

Now, what is Swamiji's view? Let us take a few quotations and see.

"Two attempts have been made in the world to found social life: the one was upon Religion, and the other was upon Social Necessity; the one was founded upon Spirituality, the other upon Materialism; the one upon Transcendentalism, the other upon Realism. The one looks beyond the horizon of the little material world and is bold enough to begin life there, even apart from the other. The other, the second, is content to stand on things of the world and expects to find a firm footing there".^{1b}

Here, Swamiji gives a masterly analysis of the vexed question of the

origin and aim of Society ; and it is a thoroughly psychological one. Psychologically, man consists of two factors, the mind and the body. Mind with its consciousness is said to be directly opposed to, though somehow or other intimately connected with, the body with its extension ; for, the mind has no extension ; and the body, consciousness. Now, the consciousness of mind assumes the form of reason in man, while consciousness is the common property of all living beings. Hence is the celebrated, yet much condemned, definition of man : Man is a rational animal. In this way, man has two sides—a higher rational side ; a lower animal one. A perfect man is he who can work out a perfect synthesis between these two sides of his nature with, of course, the higher controlling the lower, as natural and beneficial. A perfect society also, therefore, is one in which there is such a perfect synthesis between spiritualism and materialism, with, of course, the former controlling the latter, as inevitable and essential.

But, alas, how many men are perfect ; and more so, how many societies? Hence it is that, as in men, so in societies, the balance is tipped in favour of one or the other, bringing disasters in its wake.

But, why should Spiritualism, pure and simple, be disastrous? Materialism, pure and simple, is undoubtedly so ; but why Spiritualism? Man cannot live by bread alone. True. But can he not live by the soul alone? Of course, he can ; but, one cannot, evidently, expect the masses to be consisting wholly of such holy, sublime men ! Hence, in such a case, spirituality becomes confined, so to speak, to the narrow sphere of a few saints and scholars ; and human nature being what it is, soon the question of 'special powers' and special privileges comes in with what disastrous consequences we know, to our cost, specially in India !

Hence, Swamiji, an astute sociologist, with a robust common sense, refers to History in connection with this great problem of the origin of Society—how Spiritualism and Materialism are alternately resorted to as a relief from the one to the other. Thus, raw-Materialism soon degenerates itself into anarchy ; but when Spiritualism is sought as a succour, that too, has a tendency to degenerate into priestcraft, as shown above.

Succinctly Swamiji remarks—

"The West is groaning under the tyranny of the Shylocks, and the East

is groaning under the tyranny of the priests ; each must keep the other in check. Do not think that one alone is to help the world."²

In this way, Swamiji, with an open heart and an unprejudiced mind, frankly admits the necessity of both Spiritualism and Materialism, Idealism and Realism, Transcendentalism and Empiricism, Religion and Practical Arts in our social life. The 'over'—can never be desirable or beneficial in any sphere at all. That is why over-Spiritualism is just as bad as over-Materialism.

But let Swamiji be not misunderstood. It may be, naturally, asked with reference to the above: Does Swamiji, then, give up here his central position (with which we started) that Spiritualism is *the* fact of life? No, he does not ; in fact, he cannot. For, was not Spiritualism his very life-breath, very heart-beat, very soul-essence? Was he not Spiritualism incarnate, as stated by Sri Ramakrishna himself—"He had embodied himself, only for teaching the world"? Hence, Swamiji, never for a single moment, deviates an inch from his central position that—

"Our vigour, our strength, nay, our national life is in our Religion."³

So, what he means here is only this, viz. that 'Over-Spiritualism', which is but another name for stark, blind, insane fanaticism, is to be discarded like poison, and that only requires Materialism as a necessary antidote. But in Spiritualism, pure and simple, there is never any question of 'over-doing', for, what is, simply 'is', eternally 'is', and does not do anything ; so how can it 'overdo'?

Thus Spiritualism is neither opposed to Materialism, nor includes Materialism. This profound truth is illustrated in an exhilarating manner in the celebrated *Panca-Kosa-Tattva* or the Doctrine of Five-fold Sheaths, as found in the *Taittiriya-Upanishad*.^{3a} Here, we peel off the outer sheaths, one by one, to reach to the core behind (as in the case of an onion, for example) ; or, we reach higher and higher conceptions of *Brahman*, the Absolute, thus: *Anna* or Food, that is, the Body sustained by food, or Matter is *Brahman* ; *Prana* or the Vital Breath is *Brahman* ; *Manas* or the Mind is *Brahman* ; *Vijnana* or Consciousness or Philosophical Realisation is *Brahman* ; and finally and grandly *Ananda* or Bliss is *Brahman*. Thus, here we have five stages or grades :

1. The stage of Matter (Inanimate objects)
2. The stage of Life (Animals)
3. The stage of Mind (Rational Animals)
4. The stage of Philosophical Realisation (Spiritual Beings)
5. The stage of Bliss (Blissful Beings)

Here, each higher stage transcends each lower one, but never negates it. The same is the case here no less. Spirituality blooms forth, like a smiling lotus ; but destroys nothing ; just as, when the lotus blooms forth, the petals, the stalk are, by no means, negated. Such is the case here. (See p. 425 below).

And, such a spirituality is what Society embodies—one, a so-called Society, that does not do so, does not exist for long. Listen to the reverberating voice of our Prophet of Spirituality :

“The whole Western Civilisation will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years, if there is no spiritual foundation . . . Europe, the centre of the manifestation of material energy, will crumble into dust within fifty years, if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground, and make spirituality the basis of her life.”⁴

And, who else, but our fiery Prophet, would have ventured to suggest—

“And, what will save Europe is the Religion of the Upanishads.”⁵

Time has shown how prophetic were his utterances! Fifty years have passed, and in spite of phenomenal successes in the scientific spheres, is the world really progressing, is the world really peaceful, is the world really happy? Is it not really crumbling down under the weight of its sins of omission and commission? We pause for a reply!

(9) FINAL ORIGIN OF SOCIETY

Love, Renunciation, Unselfishness—three great manifestations of Spirituality—from these alone can rise any Society, and stand. Neither physical prowess, nor economic superiority, nor political dexterity can form such a basis. For—

“It is hopeless and perfectly useless to attempt to govern mankind with the sword.”⁶

How touchingly is the social impulse called "the desire to jump out of ourselves"—

"The surrender of the will or the fictitious will—or the desire to jump out of ourselves, as it were, the struggle still to objectify the subject—is the one phenomenon in this world of which all societies and social forms are various modes and changes."⁷

Thus Society stands for self-sacrifice, pure and simple, as befitting its spiritual nature.

(10) FORM OF SOCIETY

Autocratic or democratic? No *Cratic* here, but only a *Critic*. What does he do here? He simply checks.

According to what criterion? The only one that befits a spiritual society, viz. the criterion of Truth. So, if we want the best form of society, it will not do if we only go for mere '*isms*' and empty theories; but we have to see only one thing, viz. that it is a place that can hold Truth, manifest Truth, embody Truth. That is, here, each and every individual must be able to *practise* Truth actually. Theoretical Truth, is, of course, a step forward; as, then, for the first time, we come out of our dense ignorance and begin to see the path to Truth. But, really what merit or benefit is there in merely *seeing* the path theoretically, if we do not actually begin also, at the same time, *walking* through it practically? In this way, it is entirely wrong to hold that 'theory' and 'practice', 'knowing' and 'doing', 'being' and 'making' are two different things. On the contrary, these mean exactly the same thing, and together constitute Truth.

Hence in discussing the question as to whether the Upanishadic ideals, the *Vedanta* theories of the divinity and oneness of all, can be practised in modern society, Swamiji remarks in his usual vigorous manner:

"Truth does not pay homage to any Society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth, or die."⁸

What a revolutionary statement! It is generally thought that society has to follow the instructions and injunctions of the society law-givers and fashion-setters. What disastrous consequences such a procedure brings

about, we know to our cost, specially in India, during the *Smṛiti* Age in mediaeval times. The possibility of corruption in the holy name of Religion, or of accumulation of powers in the hands of a privileged few on grounds of special spiritual powers—is always there. Hence, Swamiji rightly thinks it fit to sound a note of warning :

“Societies should be moulded upon Truth, and Truth has not to adjust itself to society. If such a noble Truth as unselfishness cannot be practised in society, it is better for man to give up society, and go into the forest.”⁹

He does so repeatedly—

“What good is it to talk of the strength of your muscles, of the superiority of your Western institutions, if you cannot make Truth square with your society, if you cannot hold up a society into which the highest Truth will fit?”¹⁰

This is the age-old Indian view also, as mentioned above. Society is, of course, a divine institution. Still, from the practical point of view, its inner divinity, real nature, has to be manifested. And, then this great fact has to be kept in mind, viz. that it has to *manifest*, and not *manufacture* Truth. As a matter of fact, Truth, real Truth cannot be *manufactured* at all at will ; it can be only *manifested* through wisdom and good sense.

So, finally, what form of Society does Swamiji recommend?

He recommends only that form of society where the highest Truths can be held by all, practised by all, lived by all.

“That society is the greatest where the highest Truths become practical. That is my opinion, and if society is not fit for the highest Truths, make it so, and the sooner, the better.”¹¹

The next legitimate question is : What is the Highest Truth according to Swamiji? Swamiji is never tired of pointing that out ; and all throughout his numerous, voluminous writings and speeches, he refers to it repeatedly, vehemently and reverentially. That Truth is the Truth of India herself from time immemorial—

* *Ekam Sat*

† *Ekamevadvitiyam*

* एकं सत् । (Rig-Veda, 1.164.46)

† एकमेवाद्वितीयम् । (Chhand. Up., 6.2.11)

‡ *Neha Nanasti Kimcana*

§ *Mrtyoh Sa Mrtyumapnoti Ya Iha Naneva Pasyati*

|| *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*

¶ *Ayamatma Brahma*

“The Existent is One only”.

“One only, without a second”.

“Here there is no plurality whatsoever”.

“He goes to death after death,

Who sees only plurality here”.

“All this, verily, is *Brahman*”.

“This Soul is *Brahman*”.

This is the Highest Truth, according to Swamiji—the strictly monistic Truth viz. that there is nothing but God or the Absolute. What about the universe of souls and matter then? Is it *Mithya* or false ; is it *Maya* or a delusion? No, nothing of the kind. It, too, is God, and nothing but God. So all material objects are God, all souls are God. This inherent divinity of any and everything on earth is the central fact, the highest Truth of life. And we have all to act according to it.

From this highest Truth follow, as corollaries, many other high Truths, viz. Doctrines of Universal Love, Fraternity and Service, and the rest.

And, that Society alone is worth the name, which is based on this fundamental concept of the divinity of the universe ; and which, thus, affords a full scope for the practical application of the above sublime theories.

Divinity of the universe? Does it not seem to be a rather laughable proposition in this over-realistic, over-practical, over-bombastic, modern world of ours? If it does, then the fault is not with the proposition, but with society alone. Are we not accustomed to thinking of man as ‘a political animal’, ‘a social being’, ‘an economic unit’? If we are, then, the fault is not with the nature of man, but with our narrow vision only.

In this connection, Swamiji gives us a most exhilarating motto:

‡ नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन । (Brh. Up., 4.4.12 ; Katha Up., 4.11)

§ मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति । (Katha Up., 4.11)

|| सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म । (Chand. Up., 3.14.1)

¶ अयमात्मा ब्रह्म । (Brh. Up., 2.5.19)

"First, let us be Gods, and then help others to be Gods. Be and Make—let this be our motto."¹² (See p. 378 below).

Of course, we are eternally Gods, and so cannot actually *be* Gods again. Others are also eternally Gods, and so we cannot actually *make* them Gods. Hence, what is meant here is that, let us *realise* our divinity and help others also to do so.

Is that the only thing to be done in a society? Is it not also equally, or more, necessary to provide food and shelter and education and employment for all? How can a person realise his own divinity if there be no food in his stomach, shelter over his head, education in his mind, employment in his hands?

True. And that is why in the celebrated *Pancakosa-Tattva* as stated above (p. 356), *anna* or food has been recognised as *Brahman*, the Absolute, in the beginning. What does that imply? It implies that physical and mental well-being is, undoubtedly, necessary ; but necessary only as a *means* and never as an *end*, as held by modern sociological and communistic thinkers. As opposed to these, Indian thinkers hold that everything, everything else, without exception, is a means only, leading to that one, and one only supreme end viz. self-realisation, or the realisation of the inherent, eternal divinity of all.

In the cynical, sinful, sorrowing, modern world, Swamiji boldly, re-echoes this great message of India ; and that is his main contribution to Sociology as a unique original thinker and an indefatigable, unselfish worker.

Listen to his thundering voice, echoing and re-echoing from one end of the world to the other :

"We believe that every being is divine as God.

"We believe that it is the duty of every soul to treat, think of and behave with other souls as such, i.e. as Gods, and not hate, or despise or vilify or try to injure them by any manner or means. This is the duty not only of the Sannyasins, but of all men and women."¹³

Thus, above all theories and dogmas, sectarian prejudices and social *isms*, shines this ever-luminous idea, nay, *vision* of the Soul as eternally, entirely divine.

"People get disgusted many times at my preaching Advaitism. I do not mean to preach Advaitism or Dvaitism, or any *ism* in the world. The only *ism* that we require now is this wonderful idea of the Soul—its eternal might, its eternal strength, its eternal purity, its eternal perfection."¹⁴

"What have I to do with this *ism* or that *ism*? I am the servant of the Lord."¹⁵

So, let us repeat again: we should not try to foist any *ism* on Swamiji. He is far too great for that, and no *ism* is wide enough to hold him within itself.

Another thing also will bear repetition: It is this *Soul-ism* or the practical application of the great theory of the Soul as divine, even in the Modern Age, which makes Swamiji an absolutely original, incomparable, unparalleled thinker in the whole history of Sociology of all ages and all countries.

II

Some Important Social Questions Discussed

(I) THE CASTE-SYSTEM

(a) Origin of the Caste-System

The celebrated, yet much-vilified caste-system of India, poses, indeed, a very difficult problem for all social thinkers and workers of all ages and all countries.

Now, what is caste, how did it originate, what is its utility? Leaving aside numerous theories regarding the above, let us present the matter in its simplest form, thus:—

Caste, originally and really, is the division of individuals into different groups or sections, according to their inclinations and capacities. Ordinarily, we find four main classes of individuals, according to the above, viz.: those given to learning and devotion; those given to ruling the country; those given to trade and commerce; those given to serving and depending on others. A society, to be prosperous, needs all these four classes.

For, those who are intellectually inclined, those who can produce high thoughts and discover new facts, those who can teach others and lead the nation to intellectual and spiritual heights, should be given unbounded opportunities to pursue their intellectual and spiritual vocations in peace. They are the *Brahmanas*, the intellectual class.

But who will protect the country? There are also fighters and heroes, who have to do the job. And they are the *Kshatriyas*, the warrior-class.

Further, what about business, trade and commerce? These are also very necessary for the progress of the nation. Neither the *Brahmanas* nor the *Kshatriyas* have time or inclination to engage themselves in the infinite intricacies of the above. So a third class of shrewd businessmen and expert traders is also equally necessary for maintaining the economic progress and prosperity of the country: They are *Vaisyas*, the businessman-class,—

Finally, servants and labourers are necessary in every sphere. Those who cannot teach, cannot rule, cannot carry on trades—what will they do? They naturally serve others under their direction. They are the *Sudras*, the working-class.

If we look at the matter in this simple way, there is no difficulty in it and it is a very natural and normal thing.

Compare the celebrated verse in the Gita:

**Caturvarnyam maya sristam guna-karma-vibhagasah.*

The Lord says:—

“The four castes have been created by me according to qualifications and activities.”

There is nothing wrong or heinous here. For, castes or no castes, distinctions between man and man are always there in all societies, viz., those between the rich and the poor, between the learned and the ignorant, between the powerful and the weak, between the master and the servant, and what not. Even such an abominable thing as the mere colour of the skin has wrought for indelible differences between man and man! So, what is the good of maintaining wrongly that the caste-system alone brings about differences amongst men; and that where this system is not formally

accepted, there are no such differences at all? Hence if human differences, from the actual standpoint, as well as social, be undeniable facts of experience, then is it not better to recognise the same frankly and try to give the same a rational shape and a logical explanation? And, the much-maligned caste-system of India is nothing but a bold, realistic attempt to do the same ; and whatever be its later mis-interpretations and mis-uses, there is no doubt, that originally and primarily, the Indian caste-system was both a highly logical and a greatly beneficial one from every point of view.

(b) Swamiji's Views Regarding the Beneficialness of the
Real and Original Caste-System

Now, what is Swamiji's view with regard to this very important question? It is very necessary for us to think and discuss about it in a strictly factual and unimpassioned manner ; specially so, because, Swamiji's views regarding it have not unoften been misunderstood in India and outside.

Swamiji begins by pointing out that really caste-system exists in every society, not excluding the European. In Europe and other places, the basis of such a caste-system, involving differences between man and man, is either wealth or the sword. It is the economically wealthy or the physically powerful that rule countries and societies. But if societies be, thus, based on power and pelf, then, naturally, the poor and the weak can have no real or permanent place in the total scheme of things. For, then, wealth and physical prowess, being by nature absolutely selfish things, naturally exclude all others, if not checked by higher things. That is why history tells us about the horrible tales of societies where the poor and the weak have gradually died out through unsympathetic treatment at the hands of the rich and the strong.

In any case, Swamiji, who travelled extensively all over the world, had no illusion about the West, though he was not at all blind to its imitable qualities, and, often exhorted the East to be benefited by the same. That is why he was bold enough to declare :

"The object of the peoples of Europe is to exterminate all in order to live themselves. The aim of the Aryans is to raise all up to their own level,

may, even to a higher level than themselves. The means of European Civilisation is the sword ; of the Aryans, division into different Varnas. This system of division into different Varnas is the stepping-stone to Civilisation, making one rise higher, and higher in proportion to one's learning and culture. In Europe, it is everywhere victory to the strong and death to the weak. In the land of Bharata, every social rule is for the protection of the weak."¹⁶

What a bold and controversial statement! Will every one accept it, specially, the last portion regarding Indian caste-system? However this shows clearly Swamiji's high esteem for the Indian caste-system, in general.

Thus, after pointing out that the caste-system is in vogue all over the world, though not admitted as such explicitly, he proceeds to point out the fundamental distinction between the Indian caste-system and others. The first distinction is that—

"In every other country, the highest honour belongs to the *Kshatriya*—the man of the sword. * * * In India, the highest honour belongs to the man of peace—the *Shramana* or the *Brahmana*, the man of God."¹⁷

"It (the institution of caste) puts, theoretically at least, the whole of India, under the guidance—not of wealth, nor the sword—but of intellect, intellect, chastened and controlled by spirituality."¹⁸

What an inspiring analysis! As pointed out above repeatedly, this is the one point which Swamiji is never tired of emphasising—viz. Spirituality. Spiritual Intellect is the central fact of Indian Civilisation, all throughout the ages. And all the social customs, even political injunctions, invariably reflect it as natural. Hence the head of Indian Society is not the warrior, but the scholar, the intellectually high and the spiritually sublime wise man—the *Brahmana*, literally meaning, one whose refuge is *Brahman*, the Absolute.

The second fundamental distinction between the Indian caste-system and others, is that the former is socialistic ; the latter, individualistic.

"The Western man is born individualistic ; the Hindu is socialistic, entirely socialistic."¹⁹

Hence, in other societies, the "unit" is the individual. So, every individual can separately rise to a higher status, according to his own qualifica-

tions, enterprises and the like. But in India, the "unit" is the whole caste-community.

"Here, too, one has every chance of rising from a low caste to a higher or the highest ; only, in this birth-land of Altruism, one is compelled to take the whole caste along with him.*** If you want to rise to a higher caste, in India, you have to elevate all your caste first, and then there is nothing in your onward path to hold you back".²⁰

Now, this is a very important statement from the sociological point of view. In other societies where there is no formally accepted caste-system, yet there are, as we have seen, castes based on wealth or power, there is at least this great advantage viz. that one can rise higher—the poor can become rich ; the weak, strong, and so on. But is that ever possible in the Indian Society? In ancient India, as is well known, that was fully possible. For, in those days, castes were not really hereditary, but based on qualifications. Hence, if one acquired higher qualities, what was there to prevent one from rising to a higher status? Swamiji himself mentions some such examples, viz. those of Vasistha, an illegitimate son ; Vyasa, the son of a fisherwoman ; Narada, the son of a maid-servant with uncertain parentage, and many others of like nature, attaining *Risihood* or becoming revered saints and sages.²¹

In this connection, Swamiji quotes also very appropriately the following beautiful passage from the *Sukla-Yajur-Veda* :—

"*Yathemam vacam kalyanimavadani janebhyah. Brahma-rajanya-bhyam sudraya caryaya ca svaya caranaya*".

"Let us speak these auspicious words, viz. the Vedas to the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, to the Sudras as well as Aryas . . ."²²

This clearly shows how, originally and really, every one, without any distinction of caste or creed, was entitled to read the Vedas ; and that the later ban on *Nari-Sudras*, women and Sudras, has no authoritative basis at all.

If that be so, there is nothing strange if every one be allowed to change his caste and rise to a higher one through his own efforts. And, according

* यथेमां वाचं कल्याणीमावदानि जनेभ्यः । ब्रह्मराजन्याभ्यां शूद्राय चाययि च स्वाय चारणाय ॥

(*Sukla-Yajurveda* xxvi, ii)

to Swamiji's fundamental thesis, viz. that all are most intrinsically connected, the rise or fall of one means also the rise or fall of all others.

But is that actually possible? Take the case of a great man. How can it be said that, when a man becomes great, all others of his caste-community also become so with him? On the contrary, a great man is great *in spite* of his social circumstances, and not *because of* the same. Thus, in the midst of an ignorant, inimical, indignant society, in the face of violent opposition and unjust criticism from his fellow-beings, he alone rises up, like a mountain, to teach and lead others, far below him. So what does Swamiji mean here?

What he means, we think, is simply this: When there is the rise of a great man in a society, all others around him do not, of course, become equally great simultaneously. But they are, inevitably, roused from their sleep, either to welcome or oppose the new movement, the new ideas and ideals. In this way, positively or negatively, in a friendly way, or inimically willy-nilly, they are roused to higher thoughts, higher ways of life, and think of the same; discuss the same, for the first time. That, too, surely, is a kind of elevation, a kind of new life, a kind of higher transformation. In this way, even opposition is a kind of elevation, for, you cannot oppose anything if you do not rise to the same level. That is why we have the beautiful legend of God giving two offers to the demons, viz., that if they are born as His enemies, then they will be killed by the Incarnation of God, and become, thereby, free in three births. But if they choose to be born as His friends, then they will require seven births to become free. The idea behind this is that if you are opposed to God, you constantly think of Him in hatred, constantly vilify Him, constantly take His name in disgust, and so on. All these, also, make you God-minded, God-inclined, willy-nilly; and, you become free sooner. For, if you are a friend of God, you may not think of Him so often, with so much vigour. Hence there is no doubt that even opposition to great men make the opposers great, to that extent. Thus, it is perfectly true to hold that the greatness of a great man makes his society, too, great. Accordingly, if one has to be great, one's society, too, has to be so, simultaneously.

Now, if the caste-system of India is viewed from this point, there is

nothing harmful in it. On the contrary, it is a very beneficial one, according to Swami Vivekananda. For it grades human beings, according to their inner inclinations and inherent powers. It is not hereditary nor is it rigid, inviolable, unalterable. In that case, the caste-system of India saves much useless waste of valuable time and energy. The modern theory, too, is that all human beings, being not equally talented and good, must be given the fullest possible opportunities to develop according to their own inclinations and capacities, unhampered, within their own circles. And the Indian caste-system also implies the very same thing. Here we have, as we have seen, (p. 363) four main classes, or vocations. And, let different individuals choose to belong to the one or the other according to their own inclinations and capacities.

Hence, Swamiji, too, is full of praise for such a real caste-system.

"But the older I grow, the better I seem to think of these time-honoured institutions of India. There was a time when I used to think that many of them were useless and worthless ; but, the older I grow, the more I seem to feel diffident in cursing any one of them, for each one of them is the embodiment of the experiences of centuries".²³

"Caste is a very good thing. Caste is the plan we want to follow. What caste really is, not one in a million understands. There is no country in the world without caste".²⁴

"Caste is good. That is the only natural way of solving life. Men must form themselves into groups, and you cannot get rid of it. Wherever you go, there will be caste".²⁵

In this connection, Swamiji gives an appropriate example of a child of yesterday, destined to die tomorrow, advising an adult to change all his plans! When the West advises India to give up all its ancient social institutions, it behaves in exactly the same manner. Let the West found a stable society, first, for itself, and—

"Then will be the time to talk on the subject with you ; but till then, my friend, you are only a giddy child".²⁶

In this way, Swamiji repeatedly points out that, if the real, original idea behind the much-maligned caste-system of India be properly understood, it will be seen that it is a very modern, very scientific one:—

"Now, the original idea of Jati (caste) was this freedom of the individual to express his nature, his *Prakriti*".²⁷

"Then what was the cause of India's downfall—the giving up of this idea of caste . . . Therefore, what I have to tell you my countrymen is this:—That India fell because you prevented and abolished caste"!²⁸

But here let one thing be clear, very clear—castes should not involve special privileges of any sort whatsoever. A cobbler can rise to be a scholar ; and, in that sense, we ordinarily say that scholarship is higher than shoe-making. But, really, if both do their duties well, both are equal, and the scholar should not claim special prerogatives on any account.

"Caste is a natural order. I can perform one duty in social life, and you another: You can govern a country and I can mend a pair of old shoes, but that is no reason why you are greater than I, for, can you mend my shoes? Can I govern the country? I am clever in mending shoes ; you are clever in reading the Vedas, but that is no reason why you should trample on my head!"²⁹

True, very true ; and this is the real, original caste-system of India in its pristine purity! And, how beautifully has Swamiji brought this to light!

(c) Harmfulness of the Degenerated, Later Caste-System:

Untouchability and Priest-Craft

But, alas, history shows us that *theory* is one thing, *practice* is quite another. Hence it is that even very high theories often degenerate into very corrupt practices, as we know to our cost, specially in India, the land of numerous high theories. So, this very beneficial caste-system of India, too, unfortunately degenerated in the course of time into a kind of rigid, cruel *Caste-ism* bringing about numerous social evils in its wake as well as working for permanent injuries in the social structure of India.

Thus human nature being what it is, men of different caste-groups—originally formed purely on the basis of inclinations, abilities and qualifications and so flexible, allowing all to change their caste-groups, according to corresponding changes in their inclinations, abilities and qualifications—began after a time to claim special rights and privileges, even without

proportionate duties and abilities. Thus a question arose of the higher and the lower: the *Brahmana*, the scholar and the spiritual being taken as the highest class; the *Kshatriya*, the warrior and the political ruler, coming second; the *Vaisya*, the trader and the economic guide, coming third; the *Sudra*, the drawer of water and the hewer of wood, the labourer, coming last. Thus the original, sublime idea that "All work is equal, hence, all human beings are also so", was soon lost and the great unifying institution of Caste soon degenerated into a great dividing factor, bringing about most cruel and unjust differences between man and man, imaginable.

And, naturally, castes became entirely hereditary, having nothing to do, any longer, with inclinations or abilities—and so also very rigid, and no longer flexible or changeable. So, a person, once born in a caste, had to belong to it always, whatever be his own inclinations and capacities. Thus, a very ignorant and voluptuous *Brahmana*, once born as such, remained as such, though absolutely unfit, claiming and getting all the special prerogatives and honour. In the same manner, a very intelligent and virtuous *Sudra*, once born as such, had to remain so always, being subject to all the inconveniences and indignities of his supposedly low caste.

In this way, the caste-system, originally very just and very useful, gradually degenerated into a very unjust and absolutely worthless institution, opening the flood-gate to a host of social evils, headed by priest-craft, on the one hand, in the case of the *Brahmanas*, the highest caste; and untouchability, on the other hand, in the case of the *Sudras*, the lowest one.

Swamiji, the living symbol of justice and love, naturally could not on any account tolerate such injustice and callousness for a single moment. Hence, just as he is full of praise for the real, original caste system of India, so he is equally full of blame for the latter, degenerated, so-called *Caste-ism* of India.

Listen to his thundering denunciation of the same:—

"The conviction is daily gaining on my mind that the idea of the caste is the greatest dividing factor and the root of Maya—all caste, either on the principle of birth or of merit, is bondage".³⁰

This seems to contradict flatly Swamiji's own statement quoted above.

But we know what he really means here. The first statement refers to the real original, flexible caste-system ; while this one, to the later, degenerated, rigid one, as mentioned above. This is absolutely clear from the concluding portion of the above-quoted passage :

"The idea of oneness at heart (with a craven impotence of effort, that is to say), and outside the hell-dance of demons—oppression and persecution, aye, the dealer of death to the poor ; but if the Pariah be wealthy enough : 'Oh' he is the protector of religion".³¹

Again—

"It is in the books written by the priests that madnesses like that of caste are to be found ; and not in books revealed from God".³²

Again—

"Modern caste distinction is a barrier to India's progress. It narrows, restricts, separates. It will crumble before the advance of ideas".³³

Again and again—

"But in spite of all the ravings of the priests, caste is simply a crystallised social institution, which, after doing its service, is now filling the atmosphere of India with stench ; it can only be removed by giving back to the people their lost social individuality".³⁴

Notice the strong language Swamiji uses here. This shows how he was wounded to the very core of his heart by the degeneration of such an originally beneficial system as the caste-system. This shows also his very great sympathy and affection for the oppressed and the down-trodden.

As stated above (p. 369) history shows how, not unoften, very high theories, not being fit for the masses, lead to very corrupt practices just in the opposite direction. This has happened often in India, the birth-place of numerous high theories. This gulf between *Theory* and *Practice* was one of those things which Swamiji could never tolerate. In his vision, 'theory' is not *theory* at all, if it *cannot be*, if it is *not* put into *practice*. Hence how regretfully, but with perfect truth, does Swamiji remark :

"No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain, as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion, as Hinduism".³⁵

How true, and how regrettable!

Listen, once again, listen, with heads bowed down in shame, to his thundering castigation, and ponder:

"Who reduced the Bhañgis and the Pariahs to their present degraded condition? Heartlessness in our behaviour, and at the same time, preaching Advaitism—is it not adding insult to injury?"³⁶

It is ; it is, undoubtedly. But who, but this modern Messiah of Unity, would have thought and dared to speak of this so vigorously, yet so feelingly?

(d) Priestcraft

As mentioned above, one of the main evils of the degenerated caste-system is priestcraft. What does it imply? It implies an absolute, autocratic, unjust, selfish, tyrannical rule of society by the Brahmin priests. Of course, there was a time when the Brahmanas, as intellectual and spiritual leaders, led the nation to the supreme goal of *Moksa* or Salvation. But then they were real Brahmanas, real knowers and showers of God. But later on, the Brahmanas became very corrupt, power-mad and enjoyment-thirsty. "This tremendous thirst for power, this tiger-like thirst" made them claim special prerogatives, and preach false theories to the masses, such as, they were God's living representatives on earth, and God can be approached only through them ; so, they alone were to be served and worshipped like God. Even the most wicked Brahmana must be worshipped!"

We know, to our cost, of the numerous evils that such a priestcraft brought about in India.

So naturally Swamiji was opposed tooth and nail to this absolutely harmful system of priestcraft.

"Priestcraft is the bane of India. Can man degrade his brother, and himself escape degradation?"³⁷

"Priestcraft is, in its nature, cruel and heartless. That is why, religion goes down where priestcraft arises."³⁸

Listen to his vehement exhortations to the oppressed:

"Come, be men! Kick out the priests who are always against progress,

because they would never mend. Their hearts would never become big. They are the offspring of centuries of superstition and tyranny. Root out the Priestcraft first. Come, be men!"³⁹

Who would have dared, thus to castigate the eternally venerable priests of India in such a strong language, except Swamiji, who had the daring of a clear conscience, of a loving, pure heart, of an unselfish, dedicated life?

Listen, also, to his fearless exhortations to the oppressors:

"Ah tyrants! You do not know that the obverse is tyranny; and the reverse, slavery. The slave and the tyrant are synonyms!"⁴⁰

Thus, according to Swamiji, the living symbol of unity and justice, one of the greatest blots of the modern, degenerated caste-system, viz. priestcraft, with its inevitable corollary of 'special prerogatives', should be abolished immediately and permanently and—

"Trampling on every privilege, and everything in us that works for privilege, let us work for that knowledge which will bring the feeling of sameness towards all mankind".⁴¹

(e) "Don't-Touchism"

But, if possible, there is something still worse—viz. the great evil of untouchability, in the words of Swamiji: *Don't Touchism*. It is, indeed, one of the strangest phenomena in the whole history of the world that in this land of the *Vedanta*, in a land where the highest doctrines of unity and equality were preached right at the very dawn of human civilisation, such an absolutely heinous custom like untouchability could ever gain ground. But the only explanation, perhaps, is the one offered above (p. 369) viz., that *Theory* and *Practice* do not often go together.

Swamiji could not simply tolerate this most cruel, unjust, meaningless custom of untouchability; and his speeches, letters and other writings are full of taunting remarks, in a very strong language, against it. One or two examples may be given to show the intensity of his feeling—how vehemently, with his whole heart and soul, he hated this horrible custom that has tainted the social life of India throughout the ages.

"Was there ever a sillier thing before in the world than what I saw in the

Malabar country? . . . What inference would you draw except that these Malabaris are all lunatics ; their homes, so many lunatic asylums, and that they are to be treated with derision by every race in India, until they mend their manners and know better. Shame upon them, that such wicked and diabolical customs are allowed.”⁴²

“India’s doom was sealed the very day they invented the word *Mleccha* and stopped from communion with others”.⁴³

“Do you mean to say that I am born to live and die as one of those caste-ridden, superstitious, merciless, hypocritical, atheistic cowards that you find only amongst the educated Hindus”?⁴⁴

Here, Swamiji coins a funny, but a very appropriate, term: *Kitchen-religion*.

“You Hindus have no religion. Your God is in the kitchen, your Bible is the cooking-pot . . . People have given up the Vedas and all your Philosophy is in the kitchen. The Religion of India at present is ‘Don’t Touchism’. The present Hinduism is a degradation”.⁴⁵

Again,

“There is a danger of our Religion getting into the kitchen. We are neither Vedantists, nor Pauranics, nor Tantrics. We are just ‘Don’t Touchists’. Our Religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking-pot : and Religion is ‘Don’t touch me, I am holy’. If this goes on for another century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum!”⁴⁶

“Do you think our Religion is worth the name? Ours is only ‘Don’t Touchism’, only ‘Touch me not, touch me not’. Good Heavens! A country, the big leaders of which have for the last two thousand years been only discussing whether to take food with the right hand or the left, whether to take water from the right side or the left—if such a country does not go to ruins, what other will? . . . A country, where millions of people live on the flower of the Mohua plant, and a million or two of Sadhus, and a hundred million or so of Brahmanas suck the blood of these poor people, without even the least effort for their amelioration—is that a country or a hell? Is that a Religion or the Devil’s dance”?⁴⁷

“Don’t-touchism is a form of mental disease”.⁴⁸

“Kick such customs out”.⁴⁹

"The whole truth of austerities and spiritual exercises is, in a nutshell, that I am pure, and all the rest are impure! A beastly, demoniac, hellish religion is this!"⁵⁰

Notice the very strong language used here. This shows how Swamiji was moved to the core at the indescribable injustice, perpetrated on the so-called 'untouchables' in the holy name of Religion. And the above passages, amongst many others,^{50a} will also, for good, show the absolute hollowness of the notion that Swamiji was, after all, an orthodox Hindu, blindly supporting caste-system, and all the rest of it, with all its consequent evils. He was, undoubtedly, a Hindu; and also, an orthodox one; but in the real, truest sense of the term, viz. as one who loved India, accepted her age-old tradition of unity and universality, renunciation and realisation, humanism and humility. And real *Orthodoxy* by no means implies bigotry and unquestioning acceptance of unjust social injunctions, but only loving and respecting ancient traditions of eternal values, and not rejecting and condemning any thing, simply because it is ancient.

(f) Final Views on the Caste-System

"The few passages quoted above will bring clearly to light Swamiji's strongly expressed views regarding the present, degraded Hindu Society, and its degenerated social customs.

But now the all-important question: What are his final views regarding social customs, such as the caste-system and the rest? Does he recommend their total abolition? What are his views regarding social reforms? Let us consider, first, his final views regarding the caste-system, for example.

Swamiji was definitely against the total and permanent abolition of the caste-system. What he vehemently wanted was the total and permanent abolition of the cruel and unjust social customs, due to a mis-interpretation, —perhaps intentional, perhaps not,—of the real, original implications of the caste-system. But, the real, original caste-system, he always held, was a highly beneficial one; and so, should be properly adjusted to suit modern societies, instead of being totally rejected. That he held strong views on the same will be clear from the following statement:

"From the time of the Upanishads down to the present day, nearly all our great Teachers have wanted to break through the barriers of caste, i.e. caste in its degenerated state, not the original system. What little good you see in the present caste clings to it from the original caste, which was the most glorious social institution".⁵¹

"Castes should not go ; but, should only be re-adjusted—accordingly. Within the old structure is to be found life enough for the re-building of two hundred thousand new ones. It is sheer non-sense to desire the abolition of caste. The new method is—evolution of the old."⁵²

(g) The Old and the New

In this way Swamiji was always against ignoring the past, the ancient treasure-troves of India. On the contrary, as the passage quoted above (p. 368) clearly shows, he was always for honouring fully, and using wisely, the accumulated wisdom of the ancient master-minds, stored up in our Scriptures and Holy Books. As a matter of fact, who says that we are wiser than they so that we are justified in ignoring their advice totally?

Thus with firm conviction and clear conscience Swamiji exhorts us lovingly :

"Go back, go back to the old age, where there was strength and vitality. Be strong once more, drink deep at the fountain of Yore, and that is the only condition of life".⁵³

"Old Hinduism for ever ! Up, up, my boys, we are sure to win !"⁵⁴

(2) SOCIAL REFORMS

(a) Necessary, or Not

In this connection, another question naturally arises. If the beneficial ancient social customs and institutions have to be kept, then what about social reforms? Are these necessary, or not?

As in the case of the caste-system, so here, too, we find two apparently contradictory views :

"Do Hindus stand in need of social reforms"?

"We do not stand in need of social reforms".⁵⁵

"Then, you mean to say that there is no need of social reform at all?

"Who says so? Of course there is need of it . . . Reforms we should have in many ways ; who will be so foolish as to deny it?"⁵⁶

Now, how to reconcile the above?

That is easy enough. In reference to the discussion undertaken above it is clear that the first of the statements refers to the real, original, beneficial, ancient social customs and institutions ; the second, to the degenerated, harmful ones. Naturally, when such beneficial social customs and systems are already there, why should we ape Western customs, institutions, methods, and the like, all for nothing? Let us, rather, revive the same, and reap the benefits to the fullest.

On the other hand, the degenerated social customs and institutions need immediately be changed and reformed suitably.

So there is nothing contradictory here.

(b) Method of Social Reform

It has been stated above that the caste-system and the like should not be abolished, but only re-adjusted. How? So, the method of such a re-adjustment, or social reform, has to be decided first.

The main thing of such a method has already been stated above—it is not an abolition, but only a re-adjustment ; not destruction, but construction ; not revolution, but evolution.

Listen to the thoughtful message of Swamiji—

"I fully agree with the educated classes in India that a thorough overhauling of society is necessary. But how to do it? The destructive plans of reformers have failed. My plan is this. We have not done badly in the past, certainly not. Our society is not bad, but good ; only, I want it to be better still. Not from error to truth, nor from bad to good, but from truth to higher truth, from good to better, best. I tell my countrymen that so far they have done well—now is the time to do better".^{56a}

This is the real spirit, the just spirit, the right spirit. Do not call any-

thing 'bad', absolutely 'bad'. Even the heinous social customs, though bad, very bad, absolutely bad, from the actual practical point of view, are not so, from the absolute one, for these have a solid background behind, viz. that of an ancient, beneficial social system. It is always there to make society always good—what a great relief and what an eternal hope! Thus, *reform* is not annihilation, but advance.

"What I say is not 'reform'; but 'move on'."⁵⁷

"Sudden changes cannot be."⁵⁸

"This is my method—to show the Hindus that they have to give up nothing, but only to move on in the line laid down by the sages and shake off their inertia, the result of centuries of servitude."⁵⁹

For such a deep faith in our ancient ideals, let not Swamiji be accused of narrowness and unprogressiveness. For, every nation must have a foundation and a background, and cannot advance in an uncontrolled manner, but needs a mooring. If this be disrupted, then in the vast, billowy ocean of life, that nation will float on haplessly, with no aim, no security, no progress. So—

"Let us be as progressive as any nation that ever existed and, at the same time, as faithful and conservative towards our traditions, as Hindus alone know how to be."⁶⁰

Now, the general nature of the method of social reform being decided on, let us enter into greater details.

(c) Real Reformation: Manifestation of Inherent Divinity

We started with the fundamental thesis of the inherent divinity of one and all (p. 348). And, the greatest service one can do to one's fellow beings is to remind them of their divine nature and help them to realise and manifest the same. We have also quoted above (p. 361) the great motto of Swamiji:

"First, let us be Gods, and then help others to be Gods. Be and Make—let this be our Motto."⁶¹

This is such a wonderful motto that it will bear repetition, not only once, but many, many times. And, that alone is a *real* social reformation,

according to Swamiji. Provide food and drink, shelter and employment, education and enjoyment. Society must provide these for one and all. But, for a human being, is that enough? For, a human being is not really a physical being, a biological phenomenon only. More properly, he is a divine being in a human covering. So, just as the human covering cannot be totally ignored from the human worldly point of view, so the divine essence inside also cannot be ignored from the ultimate one. Hence if we think of and provide for the outer human covering, material sheath only, then that would be an insult to the divine essence, the real soul itself.

That is why, the best kind of help, the most sublime form of social reform is to show the way to self-realisation, which is nothing but God-realisation.

"Shall we advise men to kneel down and cry: 'O miserable sinners that we are!' No, rather let us remind them of their divine nature."⁶²

Hence, social changes, according to Swamiji, are all really spiritual ones:

"All healthy social changes are the manifestations of the spiritual forces working within, and if these are strong and well-adjusted, society will arrange itself accordingly."⁶³

In this connection, Swamiji gives us a fine description of what a good work is and what is not:

"Every action that helps a being manifest its divine nature more and more, is good ; every action that retards it, is evil. The only way of getting our divine nature manifested is by helping others to do the same."⁶⁴

Hence social reform too being good work must really and finally mean: helping others to realise and manifest their own inherent divinity, as stated above.

(d) Not Reformation, but Growth

But if the above be true, then the very word 'Reform' becomes entirely a misnomer. For, if man be eternally divine, i.e. eternally pure and perfect, then, how can he be *reformed* or changed for the better? Hence, according to Swamiji, there is, really, no *reformation* here from outside ; but only *growth* from within.

Says Swamiji frankly:—

“I do not, therefore, want any reformation. My ideal is growth, expansion, development on national lines.”⁶⁵

“I do not believe in reform: I believe in growth.”⁶⁶

Really speaking, from the ultimate, transcendental point of view, there is no question of even ‘growth’. For, the eternally divine, eternally pure, eternally perfect soul cannot even grow, expand or develop—it can only be realised, only be manifested,—and that, too, only from the empirical point of view, as from the transcendental, the Soul simply *is*, there being then no question even of any realisation or manifestation.

However, what Swamiji means here, evidently, is that our knowledge or realisation of the Soul should grow, expand, develop from the empirical standpoint.

(e) Reform is Self-reform

Now, if reform means growth from within and not change from without then naturally reform is self-reform. Here clearly the soul has to grow, expand, develop itself (in the above sense). The example is given here of a seed. The seed requires good soil, water and light from outside, so that it may grow into a supple sapling. And, for that, the help of an expert gardener is, of course, necessary. But, really and truly, the seed has to grow itself from within—so no one can help it to grow, it has to grow itself and itself alone. The social reformer is exactly in the same position. Like an expert, loving gardener, he sees to it that the persons concerned get proper opportunities to develop, or rather manifest their inner potentialities to the fullest. For the rest, they themselves have to work out their own salvation, through their own independent efforts.

Swamiji was very much fond of that celebrated verse in the *Gita*, which he often quoted:

* “Uddharedatmanatmanam natmanamavasadayet.
Atmaivatmano bandhuratmaiva ripuratmanah.”

* उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।

आत्मैवात्मनो बन्धुं रात्रैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥—(*Gita*, 6.5)

“Work out thy own salvation
Do not make the Self depressed.
The Self is Self’s friend loyal,
The Self is Self’s foe greatest.”

Repeating Gita’s messages, Swamiji also says in the very same strain :

“Each one will have to save himself, each one to do his own work. I seek no help, I reject none. Nor have I any right in the world to be helped. Whosoever has helped me, or will help, it will be their mercy to me, not my right, and as such, I am eternally grateful.”⁶⁷

And, this is the essence of reform, in the case of the individual as well as of the nation.

“Each individual has to work out his own salvation ; there is no other way, and so also with nations.”⁶⁸

Such a grand conception! The so-called small, sinful, sorrowful Self, realising and manifesting its greatness through its own efforts, depending on none, not even on God! But such is the sublime Indian view of *Moksa* or Salvation ; and such also is Swamiji’s view on reform of any kind, whatsoever.

(f) Freedom Essential for Reform

From the above, it automatically follows that freedom is an essential condition of reform. If ‘reform’ means ‘growth’, if ‘reform’ means ‘self-reform’ then evidently no reform is at all possible, if the individuals are not given full freedom of thought and action. In fact, as is well-known, bondage of any kind, physical or spiritual, is the greatest barrier of the soul, in the path of its real, unhampered development of any kind whatsoever. Hence, Swamiji always refused to be an autocratic ‘Guru’, or a dictator to any one. The only task of the *Guru* is to explain the nature of the goal, as well as the different paths to it. Then, let the ‘sisya’ or the disciple, choose whatever path he likes independently. Here, we have the great Indian doctrine, preached by Sri Ramakrishna in modern times, viz. “*Yata Mata, Tata Patha*”—“As many views, as many paths”. All paths

lead to God-realisation or Self-realisation i.e. the realisation of one's own Self as God, provided you are sincere and unselfish, and make an honest, utmost attempt to reach the goal. So—

“Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth, of well-being. Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go down. Caste or no caste, creed or no creed, any man, or class, or caste, or nation, or institution which bars the power of free thought or action of an individual even so long as the power is not injurious—is devilish, and must go down.”⁶⁹

“Freedom is the only condition of growth ; take that off, the result will be degeneration.”⁷⁰

“We leave everybody free to know, select and follow whatever suits and helps him. Thus, for example, eating meat may help one ; eating fruit, another. Each is welcome to his own peculiarity ; but he has no right to criticise the conduct of others, for, that would, if followed by him, injure him ; much less to insist that others should follow his way.”⁷¹

What an admirable broad-mindedness ! If the modern world had even an iota of this, its whole ignoble history would have been changed !

We cannot here resist the temptation of quoting from Swamiji a humorous homily to the orthodox, vegetarian Brahmins :

“Is God a nervous fool like you that the flow of his river of mercy would be dammed up by a piece of meat ? If such be He, His value is not a pie !”⁷²

(g) Evolution, not Revolution

This has already been referred to above (p. 378).

In fact this too necessarily follows from the above. If *reform* be nothing else but *free growth* then there is no question of *revolution*, or violent, sudden changes here. For, a thing when allowed to grow freely does so slowly, systematically, step by step. Every stage is undoubtedly a qualitatively new beginning, an ‘emergence’ involving a negation of the previous one, according to the great doctrine of Emergent Evolution. Still this, by no means, can be called a *revolution*. For, what is natural, is *evolution*, never *revolution*. If it be natural, for example, for the bud

to burst forth from the hard coverings, involving their destruction, that evidently cannot be *revolution*—as one cannot revolt against one's own nature. Hence it is that, every change in one's own nature is *evolution* and not *revolution*.

What is true of individuals is true of society as well. In its progress towards perfection society should have *evolution*, not *revolution*.

Hence, as pointed out above (pp. 377-78), old customs and institutions should not be totally and violently abolished, but should be changed gradually and adjusted to the present conditions. So, as pointed out above, *construction* and not *destruction* should be our motto.

(h) Uplifting, not Downgrading: Becoming a Brahmana

There is another important point to be considered here.

We all know that the present social ideal is one of absolute equality. But the main problem here is: How to secure such an equality? There are evidently only two methods: *uplifting* and *downgrading*.

The first means: All the lower classes are lifted up to become equal to the highest one—the Sudras are uplifted to be Brahmins. The second means just the reverse. That is, all the upper classes are graded down to become equal to the lowest one—the Brahmins are downgraded to be Sudras.

Now, which is preferable? There can be no doubt that the first is infinitely preferable to the second. But is it practicable? That is the crux of the whole matter. Modern experiences show that it is unfortunately not so. Hence now-a-days everywhere we hear complaints about the lowering of standards in our country. For example, now-a-days education has become much more universal, and persons from the lowest strata are given fullest opportunities for education. Thus the number of educational institutions has increased manifold; so, naturally, both from the standpoint of the teachers and the students, the standard has deteriorated at present. The tendency also is noticeable in some quarters to extol the labouring classes *as such* i.e. as *labouring classes*, at the expense of higher classes, with a really higher calibre. It may be, in fact, a kind of 'Nature's revenge' on the

higher classes, who so long, selfishly and foolishly, kept education and culture confined within their own narrow sphere only. But still from the ultimate standpoint, from the standpoint of real, national welfare, is that too at all desirable? Every right-thinking man would say—‘It is not’, and Swamiji was one of them.

As we know, Swamiji was full of sympathy for the oppressed and the downtrodden lower classes (pp. 371-72). And he knew very well that this sort of unjust thing could not go on for ever, but tables would soon be turned. So he prophesied with firm faith—

“Every thing goes to show that Socialism, or some form of rule by the people, call it what you will, is coming on the boards.”⁷³

Not only that—

“Yet a time will come, when there will be the rising of the *Sudra* class, with their *Sudra*hood. That is to say, not like the present, when the *Sudras* are becoming great by acquiring the characteristic qualities of the *Vaisyas* or the *Kshatriyas* ; but a time will come when the *Sudras* of every country with their inborn *Sudra* nature, and habits—not becoming in essence *Vaisyas* or *Kshatriyas*—but remaining as *Sudras*—will gain absolute supremacy in every country.”⁷⁴

Time has shown how true a prophecy is this!

However, if the masses are sure to rise and rule, then the best thing would be to make them fit for the same. For, rule by the *Sudras as Sudras*, the toiling masses *as toiling masses* i.e. *as ignorant and inefficient*, is sure to bring about disasters. Hence, Swamiji from the very beginning insists on uplifting the masses, making the *Sudras Brahmanas*, and not conversely.

“The solution is not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher.”⁷⁵

According to our Indian classification, the *Brahmanas* constitute the highest class—not the so-called, corrupt, power-mad, prerogative-demanding *Brahmanas*—but the real *Brahmanas*, the symbols of highest knowledge, highest spirituality, highest nobility, highest renunciation, highest love and highest sympathy.

“They are good and noble, and they are the men of God ; these are our

ideal *Brahmanas*, and, we read that in the *Satya-Yuga*, there was only one caste, and that was the *Brahmana*.⁷⁶

So, in accordance with our age-old ideal of unity and equality, let us all be *Brahmanas* in the most real sense of the term.

"Therefore, our solution of the caste-question is not degrading those who are already high up, . . . but it comes by our attaining spirituality and by our becoming the ideal *Brahmanas*."⁷⁷

"The plan in India is to make everybody a *Brahmana*, the *Brahmana* being the ideal of humanity."⁷⁸

And, let the *Brahmanas* themselves help us to become *Brahmanas*. Let them give up special prerogatives, narrow exclusiveness, greed and selfishness.

For—

"The duty of every aristocracy is to dig its own grave ; and, the sooner it does so, the better. The more it delays, the more it will fester, and the worse death it will die."⁷⁹

Hence, Swamiji makes a fervent appeal to the *Brahmanas* "to work hard to raise the Indian people by teaching them what they know, by giving out the culture that they have accumulated for centuries".⁸⁰

(i) Concluding Remarks

In this way Swamiji's method of social reform is indeed a unique one from every point of view. Who would have ventured in this way to tag social reforms to spiritual realisation? But, fearlessly echoing the voice of our ancient Rishis, even in this over-materialistic, over-realistic, over-practical modern world, Swamiji asserts with firm faith, even at the risk of being misunderstood and derided, that helping others, reforming them socially, means, first and foremost:

(i) Imparting spiritual knowledge to them.

(ii) Next comes intellectual help.

(iii) Next in order, comes, of course, helping them physically.⁸¹

Ordinarily, as pointed out above (p. 360) 'social reform' is identified with, 'provision for physical needs'. But how courageously, does Swamiji assert:

"In considering the question of helping others, we must always strive not to commit the mistake of thinking that physical help is the only help that can be given. It is not only the last, but the least, because, it cannot bring about permanent satisfaction."⁸²

So what can?

"Spiritual knowledge is the only thing that can destroy our miseries for ever; any other knowledge satisfies wants only for a time . . . So helping man spiritually is the highest help that can be given to him."⁸³

As contrasted with it—

"The miseries of the world cannot be cured by physical help only. Until a man's nature changes, these physical needs will always arise, and miseries will always be felt, and no amount of physical help will cure them completely. The only solution of this problem is to make mankind pure."⁸⁴

Will not the modern social reformers be shocked, will not the benevolent philanthropists think it very cruel to assert—

"We may convert every house in the country into a charity asylum, we may fill the land with hospitals, but the misery of man will still continue to exist until man's character changes!"⁸⁵

But can its truth be really denied? If fulfilment of physical needs be the only criterion of real satisfaction, then the West would have been the happiest of all. But is that a fact? The West itself has to admit reluctantly that it is not so. For, in spite of all scientific advances, physical comforts, material benefits—the West is the most perturbed, most dissatisfied, most disillusioned of all. Why? We ask with Swamiji: 'Why?' And, we reply also with Swamiji:

"Because Spirituality is the true basis of all our activities in life."⁸⁶

And, this, as pointed out above, is Swamiji's wonderful uniqueness in the field of Sociology.

(3) ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS OF A SOCIAL REFORMER

Swamiji elucidates this topic beautifully in his celebrated treatise *Karma-Yoga*. But it is not possible to give here all the details, and just a point or two only are touched here.

(a) Motiveless, Unselfish Work

It goes without saying that this is the very first necessity here. It has been shown above how *Sakama-Karmas* or selfish, motivated works, lead, repeatedly, to births and re-births ; while, *Niskama-Karmas*, or unselfish, motiveless works constitute the first step to *Moksa* or Salvation (p. 352). Hence a social worker too need be an absolutely unselfish one. "Work for work's sake"—this should invariably be his motto.⁸⁷

(b) Masterlike, Free Work

Thus, he should work freely as a 'master', never as a 'slave'. When are we masters, when slaves? We are masters when we have mastery over ourselves ; when we can control all our lowly, animal-like, selfish desires ; when we can rise gloriously above, as spirits, and be unhampered by our bodily cares and cravings.

On this point, Swamiji repeatedly insists. He even goes to the length of stressing this as the central point of his '*Karma-Yoga*', or Ideal of Work.

"The whole gist of this teaching is that you should work like a master, and not as a slave ; work incessantly, but do not do slave's work Selfish work is slave's work."⁸⁸

So, we should not be "caught" here, on any account.

"We get caught. How? Not by what we give, but by what we expect."⁸⁹

We must not also be beggars and traders here on any account. Sorrowfully Swamiji laments:

"We are all beggars. Whatever we do, we want a return. We are traders in life, we are traders in virtue, we are traders in Religion—Alas! and, we are also traders in love!"⁹⁰

Thus social workers should always avoid being slaves, beggars, traders, and the like.

(c) Loving, Living Work

A common objection against the doctrine of *niskama-karma* is that such *niskama-karmas* constitute a kind of callous, colourless, dead work, with no feeling, no softness, no milk of human kindness at all. But this is

entirely wrong. A *niskama-karma* is an entirely unattached, yet a fully loving and living work. But does that not appear to be a strange paradox? For, how can there be 'love' without 'attachment'? Love, in fact, is a kind of feeling, and a feeling has a natural tendency to be directed towards some one, to be attached to some one, to be confined to some one. Thus, feeling is necessarily personal. Hence, how can there ever be unattached love, or impersonal feeling, of any kind whatsoever?

There *can be*, and there, undoubtedly, *is*. But, ordinarily, we fail to understand this, because, we in our ignorance confuse 'love' with 'lust'. Hence, in Indian Philosophy a great, fundamental distinction is made between *Prema* (Love) and *Kama* (Lust). *Kama* alone is entirely selfish, entirely attached, entirely confined, entirely personal—never *Prema*. *Prema* is *Rasa*—a very difficult term to translate in English; ordinarily, it is translated as *Juice*. Juice is full and flowing, but not sticky. In the same manner, *Love* is full and flowing, but not attached.

Look at Nature! Is she not our great teacher in every respect? Look at the blooming lotus—above all muds and mires, it spreads out its golden petals all round; sends forth its enchanting fragrance far and wide; reflects around its shining glory through the heaven and the earth. So, it is absolutely unattached; yet is it a hard, callous something? No, by no means. On the contrary, it is soft and sweet to the core, with flowing honey and spreading fragrance. Again, look at the river flowing above all sands and pebbles; it dances and claps its way—so full of fun, so full of frolic, so dripping with love—yet moving on and on, on and on, unattached, unconfined, unhampered. Again, look at the blowing wind—above all dusts and dead leaves, it gushes forth, full of life, full of motion, full of merriment, yet unattached, untrammelled, free.

Such, too, is Love. Love is sweet, yet selfless; soft, yet unattached; full, yet flowing. Hence, instead of unattached, impersonal 'love' being impossible, it is the only kind of love, ever possible. So—

"Love may be symbolised by a triangle. The first angle is love never begs, never asks for anything; the second, love knows no fear; the third and the apex, love for love's sake."⁹¹

Swamiji always insists on this—on *loving Karmas*. "Duty for duty's

sake"—is, indeed, a great moral ideal. But the real motto should be: "Duty for love's sake". Of course, "Work for work's sake",⁹² but never be a "wall", which never feels misery, never loves, is never hurt—still is nothing but a wall. This is not Swamiji's ideal. On the contrary, he vehemently asserts—

"Surely, it is better to be attached and caught, than to be a wall."⁹³

Just see the intensity of his feeling! Swamiji, who cried himself hoarse over the absolute glory, absolute necessity of *Non-attachment* in every sphere of life without distinction, went even to the length of saying that even attachment is far better than *callousness*. What he means here is to emphasise that *non-attachment* never implies hardness, dryness, callousness of any kind. On the contrary, *non-attachment* implies fullest feeling, love, softness, juiciness, kindness. For—

"The perfect man can put his whole soul upon that one point of love, yet he is unattached."⁹⁴

Swamiji always insists on this—on *Love* as the very essence of *niskama-karmas*, as the *sine qua non* of any kind of social and patriotic work. Although always a strong rationalist, Swamiji, as usual with him, was never an extremist in any sphere at all. So, he is here careful to point out that neither mere intellect, nor mere feeling is sufficient by itself; but both must be combined together. Intellect without feeling is *lame*; feeling without intellect is *blind*, just like the *Purusa* and *Prakriti* of the Samkhya System—the *Purusa* can see, but cannot *move*; *Prakriti* can *move*, but cannot *see*. Thus, mere intellect cannot move us to action—for that, feeling is necessary. But, necessarily, feeling must be guided and controlled by intellect. Hence Swamiji says—

"It is feeling that is the life, the strength, the vitality, without which no amount of intellectual activity can reach God."⁹⁵

So a social worker, a patriot, though a *niskama-karmi*, though absolutely free and unattached, need not fear or be ashamed to have feelings. On the contrary—

"Feel, my children, feel; feel for the poor, the ignorant, the down-trodden; feel till the heart stops and the brain reels and you think you will go mad—then pour the soul out at the feet of the Lord, and then will come power, help, and indomitable energy."^{95a}

"Feel from the heart. What is in the intellect or reason? It goes a few steps and there it stops. But through the heart comes inspiration. Love opens the most impossible gates; love is the gate to all the secrets of the universe. Feel, therefore, my would-be reformers, my would-be patriots!"⁹⁶

Thus, feeling, instead of being a hindrance and a temptation to a social worker or a patriot, to a *niskama-karmi*, is essentially necessary to him in his great vow of universal service. So—

"Work through freedom, work through love."⁹⁷

"Be large-hearted, be broad-minded, dripping the sublime feeling of unselfish love at every step."

"Deep as the ocean, broad as the infinite skies—that is the sort of heart we want."⁹⁸

So, concludes Swamiji with his characteristic poetic flourish.

(d) Intense, yet Calm Work

But, now, consider the other alternative also, i.e. the other extreme. If there be feeling, if there be love, if there be softness, if there be juiciness, if there be kindness—i.e. if our work be due to intense feelings, then can we really work in any proper sense of the term? For, feelings naturally involve excitement, and excitement as naturally hampers work. So here we have to be careful. As a matter of fact the feelings involved here are not ordinary ones. For, feelings are ordinarily personal; these are definitely not. In the very same manner ordinary feelings no doubt involve excitement, perturbation, loss of balance; but not the above ones.

Still Swamiji thinks it fit to warn all against such a contingency. What is necessary here is: Clear thought, deep feeling, intense activity. And, at every step, we require calmness. In fact, calmness is an essential condition of any and everything good. In the Upanishad, it is taken as one of the main characteristics of *Brahman*, the Absolute—

* "Santam Sivamadvaitam."

"Calm, auspicious, non-dual."

In the *Gita*, this is taken to be the highest ideal of *being* and *acting*.

* शान्तं शिवमद्वैतम् । (Mandukya Up., 7.)

Here, the ideal person, the *Mukta*, the free soul, is called *Sthita-prajna* or *Sthita-dhi*—"One who is well-established in his spiritual vision". And, as such, he is, naturally, calm,—absolutely, eternally, blissfully calm. In the eighteen beautiful verses, where the main characteristics of such *Sthita-prajna* or *Sthita-dhi* are described, this one central characteristic of *Calmness* is always and everywhere stressed. A very fitting example too, is given :

"The rivers enter into the ocean,
Still it remains calm all over.
So, one, calm in the midst of the world
Alone attains peace, not any other."^{98a}

Swamiji also insists on the very same kind of calmness for all workers. He recommends here the Gita-ideal of "intense activity, but in the midst of it, eternal calmness".⁹⁹ He points out that it is entirely wrong to hold that work without passion is impossible. On the contrary, the less passion there is, the better we work. "The calmer we are, the better for us, and the more amount of work we can do."¹⁰⁰ For, if our energy be wasted in feelings very naturally, nothing much is left for really good, efficient work. So, self-control and calmness are the first necessary requisites here. So—

"The ideal man is he who, in the midst of the greatest silence and solitude, finds the intensest activity ; and, in the midst of the intensest activity, finds the silence and solitude of the desert . . . That is the ideal *Karma-Yoga*, and if you have attained to that, you have really learned the secret of the work."¹⁰¹

(e) Self-Confident, Courageous Work

This is another of Swamiji's central maxims. He is a great, very great, never-failing believer in human greatness, because, as we have seen (pp. 360-62)), he strongly believes in the inner, inherent divinity of each and every one of us. If that be so, whether we are reformers or the reformed, the very first thing we must all have is faith in our own selves. No kind of work can succeed, unless this be present. Swamiji even goes to the length of asserting that unless we have faith in ourselves, first, we cannot properly have faith even in God. How caustically he says :

"Our first duty is not to hate ourselves ; because, to advance, we must have faith in ourselves, first ; and then, in God. He who has no faith in himself can never have faith in God".¹⁰²

But in not a few religious systems of the world, the first thesis that we are taught is to hate ourselves as sinners, as weak and puny and impure and imperfect, and what not. But repeatedly, vehemently and vigorously, Swamiji controverts this as an absolutely ignoble, absolutely intolerable, absolutely impossible doctrine.¹⁰³ Listen to his thundering denunciation of the same—

"Yea, the Hindus refuse to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye are divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so".¹⁰⁴

Here is a stronger condemnation—

"Silly fools tell you that you are sinners, that you sit down in a corner and weep. It is foolishness, wickedness, down-right rascality to say that you are sinners! You are all God".¹⁰⁵

"All power is within you ; you can do anything and everything. Believe in that, do not believe that you are weak ; do not believe that you are half-crazy lunatics, as most of us believe now-a-days. You can do anything and everything, without even the guidance of any one. All power is there. Stand up and express the divinity within you".¹⁰⁶

"Never say 'no', never say 'I cannot', for you are infinite".¹⁰⁷

The example of 'a lion and a sheep' is one of Swamiji's favourites, and he often refers to it in this connection.¹⁰⁸

"Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep!"¹⁰⁹

Thus, every worker should be like a lion, courageous, self-confident, untiring. And his first duty will be to have faith in himself ; and simultaneously, to rouse faith in others.

(f) Worshipful, Reverential Work

And, such work is nothing but worship. What is a 'worship'? Worship is communion with something higher. According to Swamiji, every work, real work, having the above characteristics, is so. For every, every good

work, as mentioned above (p. 379), is nothing but the rousing of the sleeping God in us ; or, rather, the realising of the ever-wakeful God in us. So whether we work for us, or work for others, we serve God, God in us, God in others. And, serving God is worship. That is why, work is, undoubtedly, worship, a spiritual something, undertaken for a spiritual end, viz. *Moksa* or Salvation.

“When you are doing any work, do not think of anything beyond. Do it as worship, as the highest worship, and devote your whole life to it for the time being”.¹¹⁰

“If I am God, then my soul is a temple of the Highest and my every motion should be a worship”.¹¹¹

This is, in fact, in full consonance with Swamiji's central thesis, viz. *Spiritualism*, as mentioned above (p. 348).

(g) Work, with the End and the Means Identical

In the case of work, the question of the end and the means is very important. Ordinarily, there is a maxim: *The end justifies the means*—and this is a hotly debatable one. For example, if the end be good, can bad means be adopted for attaining the same? Was Robin Hood, for example, justified in robbing the rich for feeding the poor? But Swamiji's view on this question is definite. He holds that, however, sublime the end may be, bad means to it are never justified. so,—

“One of the greatest lessons I have learned in my life is, to pay as much attention to the means of work as to its end”.¹¹²

And so—

“Let the end and the means be joined into one”.¹¹³

(h) Humble, Thankful Work: Doing Good to Others Means Doing Good to One's Own Self

Now comes the ultimate question: As astute social workers, as benevolent philanthropists, we aspire to do good to others. Here there is always the idea of a distinction between the higher and the lower. That is,

the social worker, the reformer, the helper is taken to be higher ; while, the socially reformed and helped, somehow lower. That is, the underlying idea here is that the helper, in his infinite mercy and grace, extends a helping hand to the fallen or the distressed. Very noble, indeed ! Such is the ordinary ethical conception of mercy and service.

But in Swamiji's unique, wonderful Ethics, the tables are turned completely. Work, as we have seen, is worship. And, worship, evidently, is not doing something merciful to others graciously, deserving their eternal gratitude and heartfelt thanks. On the contrary, we ourselves are grateful, thankful that we have been given this opportunity to worship. Hence, it is we that are grateful to others for affording us opportunities to serve them, worship them as God. So, in serving others, we are ourselves benefited—and, not they, really.

What a noble conception ! Here there is no question of mercy, favour, kindness at all. How can we show mercy, favour or kindness to Gods, for, are not all human beings Gods ? (p. 360). Rather, we have to consider ourselves very fortunate that we have got opportunities to serve and worship Gods ; and instead of adopting a patronising, condescending, bombastic attitude towards them, we should be grateful to them for allowing us to serve them. So, in serving others, really, we serve ourselves. What an absolutely unique conception ! No ethicist in the world, no socialist, has ever ventured to assert this. All of them have only said this much that we should be all very altruistic, very kind, very merciful, very gracious, very helpful to the poor, to the miserable, to the oppressed, to the down-trodden. So all the kindness, all the mercifulness, all the graciousness, all the helpfulness is on our side, and on our side, alone. And, so it is presumed that all the supplication, all the gratefulness, all the humbleness is on the side of those whom we help. But what happens in Swamiji's Ethics, Swamiji's Sociology ? There the tables are turned completely. There all the kindness, all the mercifulness, all the graciousness is on their side, and, on their side alone ; while, all the supplication, all the gratefulness, all the humbleness is on our side who help them.¹¹⁴ What an absolutely wonderful conception ! What an unparalleled depth of vision ! What an incomparably large-hearted realisation !

Again and again, with unfailing courage and strong conviction, with firm faith and full feeling, Swamiji emphasizes this magnificent conception :—

“Why should we do good to the world? Apparently to help the world, but, really, to help ourselves. We shall find that helping others is only helping ourselves”.¹¹⁵

“Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world, and thus, become pure and perfect. Be grateful to the man you help, think of him as God. Is it not a great privilege to be allowed to worship God by helping our fellow men?”¹¹⁶

Who are they? They are all God,—the lowliest, the vilest, the poorest—they are all God ; so love them, serve them, worship them as God ; do not dare to help them, but only serve them and worship them as God—all through Swamiji’s speeches and writings, the same message is echoed and re-echoed with unfailing vigour and sweetness :—

“Look upon every man, woman, and every one as God. You cannot *help* any one, you can only *serve*”.¹¹⁷

“I should see God in the poor, and it is for my salvation that I go and worship them. The poor and the miserable are for our salvation, so that we may serve the Lord, coming in the shape of the distressed, coming in the shape of the lunatic, the leper, the sinner. Bold are my words, and let me repeat, that it is the greatest privilege in our lives that we are allowed to serve the Lord in all these shapes”.¹¹⁸

Bold, indeed ; and, also something absolutely new. And who but Swamiji could be bold in this way, with a boldness, springing out of a profound insight, deep feeling, clear conscience?

Again,

“All the work you do, is done for your own salvation, is done for your own benefit. God has not fallen into a ditch for you and me to help Him out by building a Hospital, or something of that sort! He allows you to work . . . not in order to help Him, but that you may help yourself. Do you think even an ant will die for want of your help? Most arrant blasphemy! The world does not need you at all . . . Cut out the word *help* from your mind. You cannot help, it is blasphemy! You worship. When you

give a morsel of food to a dog, you *worship* the dog as God. He is all, and in all. . . . This is the secret taught by Karma-Yoga".¹¹⁹

This *Karma-Yoga* is in perfect consonance with the Law of *Karma*, the fundamental basis of Indian Philosophy, as mentioned above (p.351). As we have seen, according to this Law, the world is an arena for the spiritual progress of the Soul. Hence, naturally, its every work is, or at least, should be, spiritual in nature. It should be meant for its own salvation, its gradual progress towards a life eternal, life beautiful, life blissful. Hence it is that every work is a kind of *worship*. Swamiji's wonderful *Karma-Yoga* is nothing but a glorious reflection of this lofty spiritual doctrine of India.

(i) Concluding Remarks

As social work must be of the above eight kinds, a social worker, too, over and above possessing all the necessary virtues, must also, possess specially the corresponding eight qualities of unselfishness, strength, lovingness, calmness, self-confidence, spirituality, honesty and humbleness, to the fullest.¹²⁰

Besides, a social worker must follow the ideal of Mahavira (Hanuman), i.e., must combine loyal service with intense devotion.¹²¹

Thus he must have "the intensity of the fanatic, plus the extensity of the materialist".¹²²

(4) WHO ARE THE SOCIAL WORKERS?

(a) Youth of the Country

Swamiji had great faith in the youth of the country.¹²³ Joyfully he asserts:—

"My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation ; out of them will come my workers. They will work out the whole problem, like lions".¹²⁴

"A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by

their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the down-trodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up—the gospel of equality”.¹²⁵

An incurable optimist, Swamiji firmly believed that such a band of sincere, courageous, young men would work miracles. Just listen to his supremely hopeful prophecy:

“Men, Men—these are wanted; everything else will be ready; but strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred such, and the world become revolutionized.”¹²⁶

With what a deep feeling he asserts movingly:

“My task will be done and I shall be quite content to die if I can bring up and launch one hundred such men over India.”¹²⁷

That is why he wanted to establish a *Math* or a monastery to train young *sannyasins* or monks to selfless service.^{127a} They would impart both secular and spiritual education from door to door.¹²⁸

In this connection Swamiji gives, as is characteristic with him, a new definition of a *sannyasin*—a monk. Ordinarily it is thought that a *sannyasin* is one who leaves the world and goes out into the forest to reflect on and realise God in peace. But Swamiji had a unique conception of *sannyasa*. He points out that there is a distinction between an ordinary and a real *sannyasin*. An ordinary *sannyasin* leaves the world and thinks of God in peace. Naturally this is much easier. But a real *sannyasin* lives in the world to serve mankind, yet is calm and unattached. Evidently this is much more difficult.

“The ordinary *sannyasin* gives up the world, goes out, and thinks of God. The real *sannyasin* lives in the world, but is not of it. Those who deny themselves, live in the forest, and chew the cud of unsatisfied desires, are not true renouncers. Live in the midst of the battle of life. Anyone can keep calm in a cave, or when asleep. Stand in the whirl and madness of action, and reach the centre. If you have found the centre, you cannot be moved.”¹²⁹

In fact, as Swamiji himself frankly admits:

“To be an ideal householder is a much more difficult task than to be

an ideal *sannyasin* : the true life of work is, indeed, as hard as, if not harder than, the equally true life of renunciation".¹³⁰

Hence, a social worker must strive to combine in himself the noble ideal of renunciation with the equally noble ideal of *niskama-karma*, constant unattached work, unselfish service. He may be a *sannyasin*, or may not be so—it is by no means essential that he should be so to be a social worker. But this much is essential that he should be a *Karma-Yogin*, in the above sense.

(b) Charge to National Workers

Swamiji's vigorous and affectionate charge to national workers is as follows¹³¹ :—

- (1) Serve the poor as God.¹³² This has been referred to above (p. 393).
- (2) Feel from the heart¹³³. This, too, has been referred to above (p. 387).

(3) Give up narrowness.¹³⁴

(4) Be a man.¹³⁵

Here, 'being man' means: realising one's own real nature, i.e., realising one's own divinity (p. 378).

(5) Renounce.¹³⁶ This has been referred to above (p. 387).

(6) Be active and strong.¹³⁷

(7) Be true, honest, pure.¹³⁸

(8) Give up love of power and jealousy. Do not aspire to be a leader, but only a servant.¹³⁹

This, as we know, is a very necessary maxim. The desire^o for power, honour, leadership has become so very common now-a-days, that it has practically become a bane of our social life. If an iota of Swamiji's very sound advice were accepted by us—then, much of our social troubles would have come to an end.

(9) Be patient; do not criticise others; please everybody, without becoming hypocrites and without giving up your own principles.¹⁴⁰

(10) Expand your hearts.¹⁴¹ This has been referred to above (p. 387).

(11) Rely on Self.¹⁴² This, too, has been referred to above (p. 380).

(12) Rely on God.¹⁴³

“Work on, brave hearts, fail not—no saying nay ; work on—the Lord is behind the work. *Mahasakti* is with you!”¹⁴⁴

(5) CAUSES OF INDIA’S DEGENERATION

What a regrettable, unthinkable fall! So high, fallen so low! Unthinkable, indeed, but a fact, an undeniable fact! Now the malady being so serious, its causes, too, are naturally numerous and serious ; its remedies, difficult. Swamiji, accordingly, gives a long list of the causes of India’s degeneration ; as well as a long list of possible remedies.

For examples, amongst the causes are:—

- (1) Weakness.¹⁴⁵
- (2) Narrowness.¹⁴⁶
- (3) Laziness.¹⁴⁷
- (4) Dishonesty.¹⁴⁸
- (5) Absence of *Sraddha*.¹⁴⁹
- (6) Lack of originality and enterprise.¹⁵⁰
- (7) Fear-complex.¹⁵¹
- (8) Fall of *Kshatra* Spirit.¹⁵²
- (9) Anglicised spirit.¹⁵³
- (10) Disregard for physical well-being, etc., etc.¹⁵⁴

Besides these, Swamiji enumerates some other main causes:—

- (1) Neglect of Religion.¹⁵⁵

As is well-known, Religion and Religion alone is Swamiji’s main thesis. Repeatedly,⁹ with unfailing vigour and courage, he emphasizes this,—emphasizes the eternal and undeniable fact that in India, Religion and Religion alone is the be-all and the end-all of any and every thing ; and, that it forms the basis of all branches of study and learning—Metaphysics, Ethics, Sociology, Politics, Science, Arts, and what not. This has been referred to many times above (p. 348ff).

- (2) Neglect of her past.¹⁵⁶ This, too, has been referred to above.

(3) Neglect of putting theories into practice.¹⁵⁷ This, too, has been referred to above (p. 369).

(4) Neglect of women.¹⁵⁸

(5) Neglect of the masses.¹⁵⁹

Let us now deal briefly with these last two very important topics.

III

Uplift of Women

(1) STATUS OF WOMEN

(a) Women and the People

Let us here start with the beautiful passage in Sister Nivedita's celebrated work, *The Master as I saw Him*. Such a direct evidence from one so close to him is, indeed, very valuable:—

“Our Master, at any rate, regarded the Order to which he belonged, as one whose lot was cast for all times with the lot of *Women and the People*. This was the cry that rose to his lips instinctively, when he dictated to the phonogram in America the message that he would send to the Rajah of Khetri. It was the one thought, too, with which he would turn to the disciple at his side whenever he felt himself nearer than usual to death in a foreign country, alone; ‘Never forget!’, he would then say ‘the word is: *Women and the People*’!”¹⁶⁰

And also consider his own opinion on the topic—

“The uplift of the women, the awakening of the masses, must come first, and then only can any real good come about for the country, for India.”¹⁶¹

His very strong opinion on the subject:—

“In India, there are two great evils: Trampling on the women, and grinding the poor through caste restrictions.”^{161a}

(b) Equality of the Sexes

This is in perfect consonance with the Indian view. As a matter of fact, it is one of the strangest phenomena in the whole history of mankind

that India, which, from time immemorial, has honoured women as *Shakti* incarnate,¹⁶² as living embodiments of the Universal, Supreme Mother, should ever think it fit to deprive them of their legitimate birth-rights to education, freedom, property, and what not, as bracketed with *Sudras* (*Nari-Sudra*)! But such a strange thing really happened in India, and continued even up to Swamiji's time! Hence it is that Swamiji, who dedicated his whole life to the cause of suffering humanity, concerned himself so very much for the welfare of women.

The greatest bane of our social life, as we all know, is inequality: inequality between the sexes, inequality between the so-called higher and the so-called lower classes. But as a true Vedantist, Swamiji looks upon all as absolutely equal, as *Brahman*, as God Himself.

"In the highest truth of *Para-Brahman*, there is no distinction of sex."

"Therefore, do I say, though outwardly there may be difference between men and women, in their real nature, there is none."¹⁶³

Hence, Swamiji always stands up for equal rights and opportunities for women. But—

(c) Who are the Women?

So low did we fall down, in course of time, from the high Vedic pedestal, during the *Smriti* Age, that we did not hesitate even to call women *gateways to Hell*—women, who, according to all injunctions of Scriptures, as well as all canons of Justice, are equal partners of men, both from the secular and spiritual points of view! No wonder, Swamiji's just wrath sprouts forth in thousand directions for such foolish persons—

"We are horrible sinners, and our degradation is due to our calling women 'despicable worms', 'gateways to hell', and so forth. Goodness gracious! There is all the difference between Heaven and Hell!"¹⁶⁴

So, who really are women? As mentioned above, women too are *Brahman*, God, and what is more, they are *Shakti* or Powers of God. Without *Shakti*, God is lifeless, action-less. In the same manner, from the worldly point of view, too, women are *Shaktis* or powers of men; and without them, men cannot do anything.

"When you will realise that all-illuminating truth of the *Atman*, then you will see that the idea of sex-discrimination has vanished altogether, then only will you look upon all women as the veritable manifestation of *Brahman*".¹⁶⁵

(d) Women as Mothers

Echoing the sentiment, expressed by Manu,^{165a} but proceeding one step farther, Swamiji holds strongly that those alone worship God who worship women as the manifestation of God.¹⁶⁶ Manu says that where women are happy, gods reside.

"But why is it that we are slavish, miserable and dead? The answer is obvious."¹⁶⁷

Thus, men are God ; women too are God ; hence women are equal to men. This is a very simple equation. Strange, that even this was not manifest to quite a few very wise persons of the Middle Ages!

But, really, does even India, the Vedantic India, accept it? In spite of all that has been said above, paradoxically enough, India does not preach or press for *equality* between the sexes ; but always speaks of the absolute *superiority* of women as *Mothers*.

Who is a Mother? A Mother is one around whom revolves the wheel of worldly life, the present, phenomenal life. Thus, she is the centre, the life-blood, the heart-beat of the entire philosophy of India. So, according to our honoured books, "a Mother excels even a thousand Fathers in glory".^{167a}

What a sublime doctrine! Who says that in India women are looked down upon as far lower than men in every respect? On the contrary, women are worshipped as infinitely superior to men. This, in fact, is the real inner meaning of that great and fundamental Indian doctrine of *Motherhood*. According to our Indian view, every woman on earth, high or low, ascetic or householder, married or unmarried, is a mother, in the above sense—in the sense of being the very prop of the family, society, country ; in the sense of being an emblem of unselfish love and ungrudging sacrifice ; in the sense of being a living symbol of the Universal Mother.

"Now, the ideal of women in India is Mother ; the mother first, and the mother last. The word 'Woman' calls up to the mind of the Hindu, motherhood, and God is called Mother".¹⁶⁸

So, every woman must be taught to know herself as a mother, and strive to be so, in the truest sense of the term. On the other hand, every one must be taught to honour women as mothers.

(c) The Ideal of Indian Womanhood

Apart from the general ideal of Motherhood, the special ideal of Indian Womanhood, according to Swamiji, is Sita, "this glorious Sita, purer than purity itself, all patience and all suffering."¹⁶⁹ the wife of Rama of the immortal Epic of India, the *Ramayana*. Modern girls may think this ideal of Sita rather old-fashioned and unsuitable for the modern age. But really, Sita was a very modern girl—firm, courageous, self-dependent ; yet, she was a typical Indian wife : soft and sweet, humble, devoted, forgiving.

Swamiji had a very great respect for Sita ; and he was never tired of indicating her as the very ideal of Indian Womanhood.

"Sita is typical of India, the idealised India."¹⁷⁰

"She was a true Indian by nature—she never returned injury."¹⁷¹

"She is the very type of the true Indian Woman ; for, all the Indian ideals of a perfected woman have grown out of that one life of Sita."¹⁷²

"The women of India must grow and develop in the footprints of Sita, and that is the only way."¹⁷³

In this way, every Indian woman should strive to be a 'Sita', in the truest sense of the term.

But how can that be possible? Here once again, the fundamental question of social reforms for women crops up.

(2) QUESTION OF SOCIAL REFORMS

(a) Are Reforms Necessary?

This has been already discussed above, in a general way (p. 376). In the case of social reforms for women, too, Swamiji, holds the very same

view. Here also we find two apparently contradictory views—one for, the other against, social reforms. Compare the following:

“But, everywhere under the sun, you find the same blending of the good and the bad. In my opinion, society in every country shapes itself out of its own initiative. So, we need not trouble our heads prematurely about such reforms, as the abolition of early marriage, the re-marriage of widows, and so on.”¹⁷⁴

But,

“Are you, then, entirely satisfied with the position of women amongst us, Swamiji?”

“By no means”, said the Swami.¹⁷⁵

And here too, as before, there is no contradiction at all. What he means here too is only that ancient customs are not to be discarded *in toto*—in fact, just as it is a kind of prejudice to accept all the ancient customs unquestioningly *in toto*, so it is, undoubtedly, an equal kind of prejudice to reject the same unquestioningly *in toto*. So every social custom, old or new, is to be judged strictly on merit, and merit alone.

(b) Reform is Self-Reform, in the Case of Women, no less

This, too, has been referred to above in details (p. 380).

In fact, Swamiji held very strong views on this point and never hesitated to make the same clear to all. As a matter of fact, it is not untrue that the so-called reformers and social workers ordinarily assume a superior attitude, as if it is they who are really leading the so-called poor, lowly and ignorant masses to salvation! Swamiji could never tolerate this kind of condescending, bombastic, nose-turning attitude. And, this being a very common fault on the part of pseudo-reformers and social workers, he took special pains to warn all against it repeatedly in all cases.

“Our part of the duty lies in imparting true education to all men and women in society. As an outcome of that education they will of themselves be able to know what is good for them and what is bad, and will spontaneously eschew the latter. It will not be then necessary to pull down or set up anything in society by coercion.”¹⁷⁶

"Are you entirely satisfied with the position of women in Society?"

"Not entirely", said the Swamiji, "but our right of interference is limited entirely to giving education. Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own ways. No one can or ought to do this for them. And our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world."¹⁷⁷

What a great faith in women! Women are not weak, not ignorant, not immoral,—just the contrary. But they lack opportunities, they lack training—give them both, give them all.

"With such an education, women will solve their own problems. They have all the time been trained in helpless, servile dependence on others, and so they are good only to weep at the slightest approach of a mishap or danger. Along with other things, they should acquire the spirit of valour and heroism. In the present day it has become necessary for them also to learn self-defence. See, how grand was the Queen of Jhansi!"¹⁷⁸

So do not condemn women as helpless, powerless, inefficient. But give them the fullest chances for self-reform, self-development.

In a stronger language—

"Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then, they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them. In matters concerning them, who are you?"¹⁷⁹

"Liberty is the first condition of growth. It is wrong, a thousand times wrong, if any one of you dares to say, 'I will work out the salvation of this woman or child'. I am asked again and again, what I think of the widow problem and what I think of the women question. Let me answer once for all—Am I a 'widow, that you ask me that nonsense? Am I a woman, that you ask me that question again and again? Who are you to solve women's problem? Are you the Lord God that you should rule over every widow and every woman? Hands off! They will solve their own problems."¹⁸⁰

Notice the very strong language used by Swamiji. Really his inside and outside were exactly one and the same. Hence he never minced words to please any one, but expressed his strong inner feelings by means of equally strong words.

All these go to prove clearly the high esteem in which Swamiji held

women of all kinds and status. Every woman, according to him, is, by nature, a fountain of *Shakti* or Power and Energy, and only the boulders have to be removed to make it flow gushingly. Social reformers and workers can do this much only, but nothing more. That is, they can only remove the obstacles on the way to realisation and manifestation, but cannot bring the above in any one whatsoever at all. Psychologically, ethically, theologically, metaphysically, this is a most exhilarating, inspiring doctrine—this doctrine of self-dependence, self-help, self-reform. It is not that none has preached it before—but not in such a strong, clear, systematic, unsophisticated way. Moreover, how feelingly does he refer to it always! And, as already pointed out many times above (p. 387), his uniqueness lies in emphasizing the point that reformation or self-reformation is not self-creation, but self-realisation or self-manifestation.

(3) CAUSES OF WOMEN'S DEGENERATION AND THE REMEDIES THEREOF

(a) Causes of Women's Degradation

This is quite clear from what has been said above. Causes there may be many¹⁸¹, such as, political exigencies and the consequent social injustices. But what is the most fundamental and final cause of the temporary fall of Indian women from the high Vedic pedestal of all-round progress and perfection? Want of education, true education. So, the remedy naturally lies in that single magic word, *Education*.

"Of course, they have many and grave problems, but none that are not to be solved by that magic word *Education*".¹⁸²

Again, more strongly—

"But know for certain that absolutely nothing can be done to improve the state of things, unless there is spread of Education first among the women and the masses."¹⁸³

This, of course, is nothing new. For, all social reformers and workers have unanimously stressed the great necessity of education for the uplift of all. But Swamiji's speciality lies in formulating a special system of female education.

(b) Remedies: Education for Women

Here the first question naturally is: What is education? Of course, this is not the place to discuss this in details, as a separate article will be necessary for that.¹⁸⁴ Still unless the fundamental point with regard to it is stated here our conception regarding Swamiji's views on women's uplift will not be clear. So let us ask again: What, according to Swamiji, is the fundamental point in education? The reply can be given in one word, *Strength*. And, strength means spiritual strength,—not only mere physical prowess, and not at all economic superiority or political suzerainty—but “strength that comes of touching the feet of God”.¹⁸⁵

Hence it is that Swamiji repeatedly asserts, with a firm faith and a clear conviction:

“I look upon Religion as the innermost core of Education”.¹⁸⁶

And, the reason for this has been stated many times above (p. 378), viz. religion alone enables us to realise our real nature, our inherent divinity; And, what is education if it does not do so?

Now, this is the central and the unique point of Swamiji's Theory of Education in the modern world. Next consider the side issues, from the practical point of view.

From this point of view Swamiji enumerates the following as suitable courses of study for women:

Religion, Arts, Science, History and the Puranas, House-Keeping and the Arts and Duties of home-life, Cooking, Sewing, Hygiene, plus the principles that make for the development of an ideal character, and training in ethical and spiritual life (as stated above).¹⁸⁷

(c) Need for Ancient Ideals

Swamiji's absolute reverence for the character of Sita has been mentioned above (p. 403). In connection with women's education also Swamiji constantly refers to the “ideal characters and noble examples” of Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Lilavati, Khana, Mira, and the like, which “must always be presented before the view of the girls to imbue them with a devo-

tion to lofty principles of selflessness", and "they should be inspired to mould their own lives in the light of these".¹⁸⁸

But will not the modern girls be furious? Will not they say that *uplift* means *progress*, and *progress*, in the most literal sense, in the most real sense, means *advance*, and *advance* can only mean *moving forward, never backward*. So, to say that uplift of women means going back to the past, is a sheer contradiction in terms!

This has already been discussed above (p. 376).

Really, progress is an advance forward in a *line*, if only you start with a scratch, empty-handed and destitute. But if you already possess the thing you want, and are not aware of it, then progress, undoubtedly, means movement in a *circle*, gradually coming back to the point you started from, gradually realising the existence of the great treasures so long neglected. As stated above, the Indian view of progress is just like this; and Swamiji's too (p. 379).

So how can Swamiji be charged with orthodoxy and narrow-mindedness?

(4) WHO ARE THE WOMEN SOCIAL WORKERS AND TEACHERS?

(a) Their Qualifications

Here, also, similar views are held, as stated above (p. 386).

(b) Maths for Women

In accordance with the general principle already explained Swamiji had a great desire to establish a *Math* for women with the Holy Mother Sri Saradamani in the centre. In his conversation with a disciple he gives a detailed account of his scheme for a *Math* for women.¹⁸⁹

For the reasons stated above (p. 396) we refrain from dilating on the point here. But we cannot refrain from quoting just a few lines from one of Swamiji's letters from U.S.A. (1894) to show how intense was his desire for a *Math* (Monastery) for women, which, unfortunately, could not be fulfilled during his lifetime:

"Hence, we must build a *Math* for Mother. First, Mother and Mother's daughters ; then Father, and Father's sons. Can you understand this? To me, Mother's grace is a hundred thousand times more valuable than Father's. Mother's grace, Mother's blessings are all paramount to me. Please pardon me, if I am a little bigoted here, as regards Mother. If but Mother orders, her demons can work anything!"¹⁹⁰

With the very same kind of respect Swamiji looked upon every woman on earth as "the living embodiment of the Divine Mother". And, that is why he declared :

"Therefore, for the worship of these family Goddesses, in order to manifest the *Brahman* within them, I shall establish the Women's *Math*".¹⁹¹

According to Swamiji, such *Maths* for women will serve a double purpose, from the standpoint of women's uplift. First, these will serve as training centres for *Brahmacharinis* or dedicated women workers, who will renounce the world and live the lives of self-sacrificing nuns, spreading education and spiritualism all around, from door to door, and serving all. Secondly, these will also serve as schools for girls, who will be taught the above secular and spiritual matters by the *Brahmacharinis*. Then they can, at will, leave the *Maths* to marry ; or stay on there as *Brahmacharinis*.

(4) SOME IMPORTANT WOMEN'S PROBLEMS

As the quotation above (p. 405) will show, Swamiji generally refused to discuss women's problems, on the ground that women's problems should be discussed and solved by women themselves and not by outsiders like men.¹⁹² Still Swamiji was compelled to give some inklings of his mind regarding such important questions.

(a) Child-Marriage

Child-marriage, the bane of our society, is never sanctioned by our scriptures, as during the Vedic age adult marriage was the rule of the day. Later on, as is well known, because of political, and many other regrettable causes, the custom was introduced during the darker *Smriti* Age with all its disastrous consequences.

So Swamiji, a real Indian, a protagonist of the real Indian culture, also was definitely against child-marriage.¹⁹³

Swamiji points out that the custom of child-marriage is dying out gradually due mainly to economic causes.

"Whatever might be the reason for it, the age of marrying girls should be raised still higher."¹⁹⁴

Why? Mainly because child-marriage means premature child-bearing, with all its disastrous results.

That is why, when the orthodox section of the Hindu society raised a hue and cry against the Age of Consent Bill, Swamiji, with his usual frankness, remarked:—

"And about your religious hypocrites, the less said, the better! . . . As if Religion consists in making a girl a mother at the age of twelve or thirteen!"¹⁹⁵

At the same time, Swamiji points out that grown-up girls should be properly educated, so that the evil consequences of adult marriages, as apprehended by the orthodox section, may never follow. They should also be taught to value the age-old Indian tradition of chastity, and learn to be courageous enough to hold to this great vow of chastity, even at the cost of their lives.¹⁹⁶

(b) Widow-Marriage

But, Swamiji was not a supporter of widow-marriage.¹⁹⁷ He did not, of course, explicitly condemn it as wrong or sinful. But at the same time he pointed out that as it is difficult for a girl to get married suitably even once, the question of widow-marriage had better be not raised.¹⁹⁸

Specially he emphasised the age-old Indian tradition of monogamy—for men and women alike.¹⁹⁹ If according to the common Western custom of divorce and widower-marriage and widow-marriage, men and women are given unbounded freedom to take up any woman or man as wife or husband, just for individual pleasure or for satisfaction of animal instincts, then "the results must be evil, evil children, wicked and demoniacal".²⁰⁰

Our ancient Indian view, also, is just the same. It is true that polygamy, widower-marriage, widow-marriage, even divorce, were allowed, rather

tolerated, in Ancient India ; but, the ideal was always that of monogamy—fidelity and chastity, self-control and self-sacrifice for both men and women alike.

(c) Freedom in Marriage

This is another vexed question. Should the individuals concerned alone have any say in the matter, or Society? Here we have two extreme views. The modern view is that marriage is an individualistic event, concerning those two individuals alone ; and society should have no say here at all. The orthodox view is that marriage is a social event concerning the whole community, and so society has a right to dictate whom you shall marry, and whom not.²⁰¹

Swamiji supports the latter view, and boldly asserts :

“And, so long as you live in Society, your marriage certainly affects every member of it ; and, therefore, Society has the right to dictate whom you shall marry, and whom you shall not.”²⁰²

Of course, it is true that times have changed, and society itself has done so. Ancient sublime ideals are no longer honoured, individuals themselves are neither so spiritual, nor so self-sacrificing, as before.

“But however faulty the working out may be, the principle is sound, and if the application has become defective, if one method has failed, take up the principle, and work it out better ; why kill the principle? . . . The principle is eternal, and must be there. Work it out afresh and make a reformed application.”²⁰³

We say again—very bold utterances for the Modern World, a world that prides itself in being a rationalistic world of independent thought, and a democratic one of free action. But Swamiji never cared for cheap popularity and public approval. What he found to be true, he preached as true, irrespective of the consequences !

And we ask again, was not Swamiji justified. More than half a century has passed ; but in spite of absolute, untrammelled rights to marry any one, just as one likes, and divorce him or her, whenever one likes, re-marrying whomsoever one likes—is the institution of marriage more successful in the West than here? Are the free women happier there than

here? Is Society more progressive, more stable, more peaceful there than here? Even the Westerners will not assert that. For, why, then, a divorce every five minutes? The original marriage was due absolutely to your free choice. So, why does it break up every five minutes? We pause, again, for a reply.

(d) Is Marriage Compulsory for Women?

Time was when women could easily be either *Brahmavadinis* (ascetic nuns) or *Sadyobadhus* (house-wives), just as they liked.²⁰⁴ But later on when all the social customs became much more rigid and inviolable, marriage also became compulsory for women. Swamiji was dead against such a cruel, meaningless custom. On the contrary he, himself a *Sannyasin* to the very core of his heart, recommends that *Brahmacharya* be taught to all, irrespective of sex, age, caste or creed.²⁰⁵ For, self-control is equally needed by all—not only by men, but more so by women; not only by the aged, but more so by the young; not only by a *Brahmana*, but more so, by a *Sudra*. That is why he wanted so much to establish *Maths* or monasteries for both men and women alike. That is why he asserts with firm faith:

“Our motherland requires for our well-being some of her children to become such pure-souled *Brahmacharis* and *Brahmacharinis*.”²⁰⁶

Thus, according to Swamiji, marriage is not compulsory for women. In fact, an absolute protagonist of freedom for all he cannot make anything *compulsory* for any one at all.

“My whole ambition of life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate.”²⁰⁷

Let women, thus, settle their own fate, choose the life of an ascetic or a house-wife, according to their inclinations and capacities.

In fact, the goal is the same everywhere every moment for every one, —the same—viz., *Moksa*. So what harm is there if the means be different, to suit the different powers and abilities of different persons? Listen to his thundering voice:

“Hinduism indicates one duty, and only one for the human soul. It is to

seek, to realise the permanent amidst the evanescent. No one presumes to point out any one way in which this may be done. Marriage or non-marriage, good or evil, learning or ignorance, any of these is justified, if it leads to that goal."²⁰⁸

Can anything be more magnanimous? No dictation, no compulsion, no imposition of any kind whatsoever; but, freedom,—real, unadulterated freedom; freedom, not inconsistent with self-control—for all.

(5) CONCLUDING REMARKS

In tune with his general doctrine of absolute equality and absolute liberty for all, Swamiji's views regarding the uplift of women, too, manifest clearly this full Vedanta-spirit of *Unity*, on the theoretical side, and *Fraternity*, on the practical. Here, too, as elsewhere, he avoids the extremes, yet supporting what is good and beneficial in both. That is why he often sounds quite contradictory, as noted above. In this connection, also, he does not totally accept or reject ancient views; but what he tells us is that the eternal core of Truth in the ancient laws must always be kept in view, however much it may be obliterated by the dusts of ages and cobwebs of prejudices. Again, from one point of view, he is all for full individual freedom for men and women equally; from another, he holds that as man is a social being, and society is meant for all, it has every right to dictate to the individuals. In other words, just as an uncontrolled democracy, running riot, is not beneficial, so a benevolent dictatorship, bringing mass welfare, is not harmful. And this is Swamiji's uniqueness; and, this is what makes him open to criticisms and mis-interpretations from both orthodox and ultra-modern sections of society.

And, who but a Vivekananda would have the courage to call a spade a spade, and assert:

"If you do not give opportunities to one to become a lion, no wonder, that he will become a cunning fox. Women are *Shakti* or Power but that *Shakti* is being used for bad purposes alone. The reason for that is that men are oppressing them. So, they are like vixen only. But, when there will not be any more oppression, then, they will surely become lionesses."²⁰⁹

And, finally, who but an inspired seer, "harder than a thunderbolt and softer than a flower", would have given this soul-stirring message to the women of India:

"And, so what would you say, Swamiji, to the women of this country?" "Why, to the women of this country", said Swamiji, "I would say exactly what I say to the men: Believe in India and in our Indian Faith. Be strong and hopeful and unashamed, and remember, with something to take, Hindus have immeasurably more to give than any other people in the world'." ²¹⁰

Every word of this wonderful message is a gold mine by itself. It implies five great eternal ideals—Faith in Mother-land, Faith in Self, Strength, Optimism, Broad-mindedness. What more is needed?

IV

Uplift of the Masses

(a) Nari-Sudra

Nari-Sudra, Women and the Untouchables—what a shameful slogan for the power-mad, degenerated, so-called upper classes to deprive the so-called lower sections of society of their absolute birth-rights to freedom, education, domestic, social, economic, political, and religious equalities, and what not. So Swamiji, a fiery protagonist of real Indian culture and civilisation, turns his attention naturally to wiping away this darkest spot in the history of India. Hence it is that he too takes the two together, of course, in a reverse sense, and cries out: "Never forget! the word is 'Women and the People'. So both the problems viz., those of uplift of women and uplift of the masses, have been dealt with by him in a similar manner, as is natural.

Separately, also, he asserts repeatedly:

"I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall." ²¹¹

(2) SWAMIJI'S INTENSE LOVE AND PRAISE FOR THE MASSES

But Swamiji's great emphasis on the uplift of women and the masses was not due to a cold, callous, colourless, sense of duty ; for as we have seen (p. 387), according to Swamiji himself, social work is, of course, a *niskama-karma*, or a wholly unselfish, impersonal act ; yet it is not devoid of feelings. Hence Swamiji, though a *Sannyasin*, or an ascetic, and an entirely *niskama-karmi* or a selfless worker, had always a very great feeling of affection and respect for both women and the masses. So he went out of his way to praise them constantly to pay compliments to them for their good qualities, and thereby bring them before the public eye.

Thus just as he looks upon all women, high or low, as "living embodiments of the Divine Mother", as "domestic Goddesses" (p. 401), and praises them as embodiments of all virtues, so he looks upon the masses as manifestation of God Himself, and very highly praises them vociferously, literally to the skies repeatedly.^{211a}

They are "very good, not violent, not dense, slow and eager and thirsty for information",²¹² having greater capacity for work and self-reliance than others.^{212a} They are the backbone of a nation, and on them depends all physical amenities of the so-called higher classes.

In fact Swamiji is never tired of pointing out the wonderful calibre and unique merits of the poor, oppressed, down-trodden working classes. Starved and stricken, they, "endowed with the inexhaustible vitality of a Rakta-Vija",^{212b} work on with great fortitude and courage for the sake of others.

How feelingly does Swamiji assert—

"Living on a handful of oatmeal, they can convulse the world ; give them only half a piece of bread, and the whole world will not be big enough to contain their energy."^{212c}

Again, lovingly :—

"Such peacefulness, such contentment, such love, such power of silent and incessant work, and such manifestation of lion's strength in times of action—where else will you find these?"^{212d}

Really, how patiently, silently, calmly do they work for us—unpraised, and over and above that, vilified and ill-treated. With great feeling Swamiji points out that to work in such a way is indeed the height of heroism. For, we do many good things for the sake of public approbation, for receiving the homage of mankind, for getting something in return.

But—

“Where nobody looks, no one gives a word of encouragement, where everybody hates—that living amid such circumstances, and displaying boundless patience, infinite love, and doubtless practicality, our proletariat are doing their duty in their homes day and night, without the slightest murmur—well, is there no heroism in it?”²¹³

There is, undoubtedly, there is. But who has the eye to see and the heart to feel it? Who has the courage to assert openly and contrary to general opinion:

“Our masses are gods as compared with those of other countries.”²¹⁴

“In every other respect, our masses are much more civilised than the European masses.”²¹⁵

“The poor in the West are devils; compared to them, ours are angels, and it is, therefore, so much the easier to raise the poor.”²¹⁶

“And, besides, they have got the wonderful strength that comes of a pure and moral life which is not to be found anywhere else in the world.”^{216a}

As pointed out repeatedly above, Swamiji loved the masses with his whole heart and soul, with an intense sincere devotion, that was absolutely unselfish, yet entirely full and soft. Again and again, with unfailing vigour and never-damped enthusiasm, with deepest affection and purest interest, he exhorts all to take up this supreme and sublime vow of service of the masses as a divine duty:

“Where should you go to seek for God? Are not all the poor, the miserable, the weak, Gods? Why not worship them first?”^{216b}

Again:

“Let these people be your God—think of them, work for them, pray for them incessantly and the Lord will show you the way.”²¹⁷

“The poor, the down-trodden, the ignorant—let these be your God.”²¹⁸

This is no excessive exuberance, no empty outpouring, no vain showing

off ; but the very voice of the soul—its deepest feeling, its loftiest craving, its sweetest dream.

As it is, it is very difficult to look upon human beings—so full of faults and foibles—as God Himself. But Swamiji actually did so—not only preached, but actually did so. And, is it not far more difficult to look upon the poor, the ignorant, the wicked as God Himself? And Swamiji did that also. And, that is his greatest contribution to Sociology, and that is his most inspiring message to the weak and the oppressed, all over the world.

(3) CAUSES OF THE DEGENERATION OF THE MASSES AND REMEDIES THEREOF

“We are to blame! Stand up, be bold, and take the blame on your own shoulders. Do not go about throwing mud at others ; for, all the faults you suffer from, you are the sole and the only cause.”²¹⁹

What a bold, frank, confession! and this is Swamiji’s laudable attitude all throughout. No putting of blame on others, no shirking of responsibilities, no humming and hawing—but a straight, frank, bold, heart-felt admission—

“Let us blame none, let us blame our own *Karma*.”²²⁰

Thus we, the culture-proud, power-mad, pride-intoxicated so-called ‘upper classes’, through our ignorance, selfishness and narrow-mindedness have neglected, oppressed, and misunderstood the so-called ‘lower classes’, throughout the ages, bringing about the greatest evils of priest-craft, untouchability and what not. All these have been referred to above. (p. 372).

But what we note here, once again, is Swamiji’s absolute uniqueness in the matter. The general custom is to blame the masses for their own faults and failings. But that was not Swamiji’s custom. On the contrary, he asserted repeatedly, with full faith:

“They are mentally and physically handsome, but we hated and hated them till they have lost faith in themselves”.²²¹

What a magnanimous, sociological view!

And, what are its remedies?

The very same remedies, as stated above (p. 407).

"Education, education, education alone!"²²²

In this connection, Swamiji feelingly refers to his travels throughout Europe, and how he "used to shed tears",²²³ thinking of the absolutely miserable state of the poor in India, as contrasted with that of Europe. And—

"What made the difference? Education was the answer I got."²²⁴

This has been referred to above (p. 407).

(4) EDUCATION FOR THE MASSES

And, what kind of education will suit the masses?

First, the problem is as regards the medium of instruction. According to Swamiji, the medium naturally must be the vernacular. But at the same time Sanskrit, the eternal vehicle of our age-old culture and civilisation, must not be neglected. For, education is not mere information, but also culture, and Indian culture cannot be known and acquired without a thorough study of Sanskrit.²²⁵

Next, what is the process of education? This, too, has been discussed above (p. 404). In accordance with his central doctrine of 'the Divinity of all souls' Swamiji says here, as before, that education is self-education:—

"Our duty is to put ideas into their heads, they will do the rest".²²⁶

So, in education, specially in that of education for the masses, *Sraddha*, or self-belief, is absolutely necessary.

"Through education, through faith in one's own self, the inherent *Brahman* wakes up in them, while *Brahman* in us is gradually becoming dormant."²²⁷

Further, the problem of the venue of education. The masses, the poor, ignorant villagers cannot surely be expected to come to cities for joining schools or colleges. So—

"If the poor boy cannot come to education, education must go to him".²²⁸

So what is essentially needed here is a band of unselfish social workers, specially *Sannyasins*, who will go from place to place, door to door, not only preaching, but also teaching.²²⁹

For, "Remember, the nation lives in the cottage."²³⁰

What subjects? As usual, both secular and spiritual, viz. "History, Geography, Science, Literature and along with these, the profound truth of Religion".²³¹

In this connection, Swamiji makes an apparently contradictory assertion:

"What will you propose for the improvement of our masses"?

"We have to give them secular education . . . Impart even secular knowledge through Religion".²³²

Now, 'secular knowledge' evidently is that of Science, Arts and Crafts, Politics, Economics and the like. And, what place has Religion here?

Religion has a central place in any and everything in India, from time immemorial as shown above (p. 347). So, if religion be the foundation of all other branches of studies, according to our Indian view, the knowledge of other branches of studies, or secular knowledge, must, of necessity, be knowledge through religion. That is, in all cases, they must be taught this great spiritual truth, this sublime truth of religion that secular knowledge is not meant for worldly enjoyment, but for spiritual realisation. This is not something absurd, not something laughable, not something impossible—but this is the only real fruitful method of education.

Other points have been discussed above (p. 380 ff.). Such as:—

(5) REFORM IS SELF-REFORM IN THE CASE OF THE MASSES, NO LESS

This, as we have seen above (p. 380), was one of Swamiji's central theories. In the case of the masses, too, he emphasized the point again and again:

"The only services to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, to develop their lost individuality . . . They are to be given ideas; their eyes are to be opened to what is going on in the world around them, and then they will work out their own salvation. Give them ideas—that is the only help they require, and then the rest must follow as the effect. Ours is to put the chemicals together, and the crystallization comes in the

law of Nature. Our duty is to put ideas into their heads, they will do the rest. This is what is to be done in India".²³³

Again—

"We help them to help themselves".^{233a}

"My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody ; and, then, let men and women settle their own fate".²³⁴

What a great faith in human nature! According to him no one is so ignorant, so weak, so lacking in self-confidence as not to be able to work out his own salvation—no one, not even a single *Zenana*-confined woman ; not even a single ordinary man in the street. Give them a vigorous start ; and then, they, even they, will run forward of their own accord. Pour down the life-giving water ; and then, they, even they, will bloom forth of their own accord. Open wide the shuttered windows ; and, then, they, even they, will shine forth in the golden rays of the sun. Such, truly, is human nature, eternally glorified in its own glory, eternally illumined in its own light, eternally beautified in its own beauty! But how many know that, admit that, rejoice in that? Very few, indeed ; and not even one in a million in such a superb, exquisite, loving way!

(b) Charge to Social Workers for the Masses

All these have been referred to above (p. 398). Yet, listen, again, to his main charge to social workers—to die for others :

"Love the poor, the miserable, the down-trodden, and the Lord will bless you".²³⁵

"Onward for ever! Sympathy for the poor, the down-trodden, even unto death—this is our motto. Onward, brave lads!"²³⁶

"Let each one of us pray day and night for the down-trodden millions in India, who are held fast by poverty, priest-craft, tyranny—pray day and night for them".²³⁷

This, in fact, was in Swamiji's constant and central thought—their uplift, the one passionate desire of this absolutely passionless saint. So, according to his own definition, he was the greatest *Mahatma* living on earth:—

"Him I call a *Mahatman* (Great soul) whose heart bleeds for the poor ; otherwise, he is a *Duratman* (wicked soul)".²³⁸

The intensity of his feeling in this regard may be gauged from the following passionate passage :

"I love you ever so much ; but I would wish you all to die, working for others—I would be rather glad to see you do that".²³⁹

This, as pointed out above (p. 416), is no vain lip-assertion, no grandiose verbosity, no effervescent sentimentalism, but the heart-rending cry from his innermost heart, from his loving, anguished heart, from his stainless, sublime heart.

"Who feels for two hundred millions of men and women, sunken for ever in poverty and ignorance—where is the way out? Who feels for them? They cannot find light or education. Who will bring the light to them—who will travel from door to door, bringing education to them?"²⁴⁰

This was *Niskama-Yogi* Swamiji's constant thought and worry. The answer really is: Everyone, everyone of the so-called upper-classes, without exception :

"My heart is too full to express my feeling: You know it, you can imagine it. So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance I hold every man a "traitor", who having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them. I call these men who strut about in their finery, having got all their money by grinding the poor, wretches, so long as they do not do anything for these two hundred millions who are now no better than hungry savages".²⁴¹

His heart, in fact, was always *too full*, for the down-trodden millions of India,²⁴² and we can all imagine it!

V

An Estimate

(1) THEORETICAL VALUE OF SWAMIJI'S SOCIALISM: SPIRITUALISM

Such, in brief, is the Sociological Theory of Swami Vivekananda. Now is the time to ask: What is its worth, from the theoretical as well as practical

points of view? Of course, all these have been discussed before in some places.

First, theoretically, as we have seen (p. 349), it is essentially a kind of Spiritualism.

"My mission is to show that Religion is every thing, and in every thing."^{242a}

(a) Real Implications of Spiritualistic Socialism

Now, what is the worth of Spiritualism, as a theory of Society?

The implications of such a theory, as we have seen before, are that:

(i) Man is not a mere body-mind complex but something more, something beyond, something over and above (p. 355).

(ii) Man is never a sinner, being divine (p. 348).

But can these be accepted? Leave aside the deeper philosophic side, involving endless, hair-splitting arguments and counter-arguments. But whatever be the verdict of Philosophy in the long run, can this be accepted, at least from the Sociological standpoint?

Ordinary sociologists would, perhaps, say: it cannot. As it is, we are here confronted with a dual conception, a conception of two warring entities, the body and the mind. According to Modern Psychology, and so Sociology, both are to be attended to equally—and that is complication enough. So, what is the use, here, from the sociological point of view, of adding a third entity, viz. the *Spirit*, unnecessarily, to complicate matters, still further?

The use is that—if it can be termed so—there is no way out. So, there is no question of *adding* as if it is something that depends on human will. It does not—for, Truth is independent of human thought (p. 358ff.). Hence here, there is no question at all of any *addition* of any kind whatsoever. But there is only a question of *existence*, and *existence*, according to our Indian view, is eternal. Thus, the Spirit, the Soul, the Self—call it by any name—the *Atman*, in short, is eternally existent; and, therefore, we have here no option but to recognise it, take it into account, make provision for it. And, this is what Indian sociologists, including Swamiji, do.

Western sociologists do not, and their even very scientific, very logical, very well-intended and humanitarian theories have not yet been able to solve any problem of the world at all.

This is no exaggeration, no biased statement, no pessimistic prediction—but an undeniable fact, an unwholesome truth, an unwelcome reality. For, in spite of everything being said and done, the modern world is not happy—it may be successful, according to the ordinary criteria; but it is not happy. So, according to the real criteria, it is not even really *successful*, for, the only criterion of *success* is *happiness*.

Is it, then, a purely hedonistic theory that we are recommending here—that much-maligned Hedonism of Ethics? Do we, then, think that selfish pleasure is the only goal of life? That, indeed, is wholly unacceptable.

(b) Supra-Hedonism

We know that Hedonism, as an ordinary ethical theory, is wholly unacceptable—as it makes Ethics impossible, and reduces human beings to the status of mere brutes. So, our theory, Indian theory, is not ordinary Hedonism, but extraordinary Hedonism, that is, Super-Hedonism.

What is extraordinary Hedonism, or Super-Hedonism? Briefly it is not a doctrine of *Bhoga* or selfish pleasure, but of *Ananda* or *Rasa* or spiritual joy or happiness or Juice or Bliss. *Bhoga* is one thing, *Ananda* quite another. There is no *Bhoga* in *Brahman*, (God or the Absolute) but there is *Ananda* in Him. In fact, according to the *Vedanta*, *Ananda* constitutes the very essence of God or the Absolute, He being *Satchidananda-svarupa*, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss in essence. That is, the universe of souls and matter—being either identical with Him (according to the Monistic Schools of the *Vedanta*), or identical with Him in essence and different from Him in form, as His effect (according to the Monotheistic Schools)—is also, bliss in essence, whatever its outer form or appearance may be. Hence, the celebrated *Ananda-Tattva* or Doctrine of Bliss of the *Vedanta*, so beautifully expressed, for example, in the *Taittiriya-Upanishad* :—

"*Anandadhyeva khalvimani bhutani jayante. Anandena jatani jivanti, Anandam prayantyabhisamvisantiti.*"*

"From Bliss, verily, do all these beings arise, by Bliss are they sustained, to Bliss do they return".

Swamiji also says in the very same strain:—

"Now, Philosophy insists that there is a joy which is absolute, which never changes. That joy cannot be the joys and pleasures we have in this life, and yet *Vedanta* shows that everything that is joyful in this life is but a particle of that real joy, because that is the only joy there is. Every moment really we are enjoying the absolute bliss, though covered up, misunderstood and caricatured. Wherever there is any blessing, blissfulness, or joy, even the joy of the thief in stealing, it is that absolute bliss coming out, only it has become obscured, muddled up, as it were, with all sorts of extraneous conditions, and misunderstood".²⁴³

So, such a real joy, happiness, bliss has to be realised—not only through Philosophy and Religion, but also through any and everything, through Science, Arts, Sociology, Politics, Economics and what not (*ante*, p. 348). And, the greatest mistake of modern *Pundits* is to take 'Pleasure' or *Bhoga* for 'Joy or Bliss or Happiness or Ananda'. *Bhoga* is selfish, so narrow, *Ananda* is unselfish, so universal; *Bhoga* is negative, *Ananda*, positive; *Bhoga* brings about its own destruction; *Ananda*, its own fulfilment. That is why, *Bhoga* is not *Ananda*. And, Swamiji's uniqueness, from the theoretical standpoint, consists in his insistence on this Doctrine of Spirit—, which is another name for the Doctrine of Bliss,—as the very foundation of Sociology, no less. The Divine Spirit in us has to be realised; together with this, the Divine Bliss, as well—this should be our only aim in life.

What about food and drink and shelter and employment? These should, surely be provided for, but only as a *means*, never as an *end*. In one sense, of course, it is a misnomer to call these even a *means*, as these are, by no means, *essential* to the end. For, there are men and women, may be few in number, who realise the Divine Spirit as well as the Divine Bliss in spite of adverse worldly circumstances.

* आनन्दाद्वयेव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति, आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यभि-
संविशन्तीति ॥ (Tait. Up., 3.6.)

(c) The Higher and the Lower

In this connection, that fundamental, difficult question of the relation between the empirical and the higher, and the lower, rises automatically. Is the lower a *means* to the higher? Does the higher include the lower? Or, does the higher negate the lower?

This, indeed, is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion regarding this difficult problem. But only three main views may be mentioned:—

(1) The higher *includes* the lower, and the lower is a *means* to the higher. e.g. the first step leads to the second, and the second includes the first in that sense.

(2) The higher negates the *lower*, and the *lower* is not a means to the higher. e.g. the first step need not necessarily lead to the second, as the strong and the vigorous can jump up to the second, even without mounting the first.

(3) The higher *transcends* the lower, and the lower, though not a means to the higher, is, indeed, a preceding stage in the gradual, upward process of evolution; but as soon as it reaches the higher, something absolutely new, something qualitatively different, something higher *emerges* out of it, wholly transcending the lower, e.g. the first step is one that is previous to the later one, but the second step is qualitatively different from the third and a new “emergent”. Thus, in course of evolution, we have three or four distinct stages:—Life, Mind and Spirit (the last according to Indian Philosophy), each later higher one qualitatively different from the previous lower one, and an entirely new one.

(d) *Pañca-Kosa Tattva*

In this connection, reference has already been made to the celebrated *Pañca-Kosa-Tattva* of the Taittiriya Upanishad (p. 356 ff.). As we have seen, here, too, we have the same series from the lower to the higher—*Anna* (Matter), *Prana* (Life), *Manas* (Mind), *Vijñana* (Spiritual Consciousness), *Ananda* (Bliss). But, properly understood, this is not exactly a kind of Western doctrine of *Emergent Evolution*, as ordinarily understood and applied.

For, really, here there is no *evolution*, no raising up, no elevation of the *lower* to the *higher*, for the simple reason that, as mentioned above (p. 362), according to our Indian view, Truth is eternal ; Truth is what it always is ; so Truth can have no changes, no progress from untruth to Truth, from the less to the more, from the lower to the higher, from the less perfect to the more perfect—it is Truth, always Truth, full and perfect Truth. Hence there may be changes in realisation and manifestation only from the empirical point of view (*ante* p. 378). So, it is only from this point of view that there may be *higher and lower conceptions* of Truth, but not of *Truth itself as such*. This is the only implication of the *Pañca-Kosa-Tattva*.

(e) Swamiji's Conception

But Swamiji accepts none of the above views, for the simple reason that he, in common with the Indian sages, holds that there is no progress from the *lower* to the *higher*. Rather:—

“We have to follow the plan laid down by our ancestors ; that is, to bring all the ideals slowly down among the masses.”^{243a}

The spiritual ideal is there, eternally there, nothing leads to it, nothing is a means to it ; only, it has to be disseminated amongst all. What then? Then, all the common social problems of food and drink, shelter and employment, rights and duties, freedom and enjoyment will come to be, automatically, solved. Note the firm assertion by Swamiji:—

“I am only the figurehead. I am only a *Tyagi* monk. I only want one thing. I do not believe in a God or Religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth.”²⁴⁴

(f) Practical Value of Religion

In this way, as mentioned above, religion is practical, practical through and through. For, according to Swamiji, it can not only satisfy the soul theoretically, but also satisfy the mind-body complex practically.

That seems a very strange, very bold, very confident assertion, indeed! But really it is not so. For, religion alone brings about a change of hearts,

and this alone can provide for that condition of society where equal rights and opportunities are granted for all.

What, after all, is a society? It is neither a machine nor an automaton, but a living organism of human beings. So if human beings be perfect, society is also so. And in such a perfect society, can tears flow from a widow's eyes, or a piece of bread be snatched away from an orphan's mouth? No, surely not. Thus, if there be perfect love, perfect unselfishness, perfect justice—as there must, of necessity, be in a perfect society—there cannot be any starvation, any destitution, any unemployment, any sins and sorrows, any pains and privations, any faults and foibles of any kind whatsoever.

Is not that an empty dream, a vain vision, an impracticable idea? According to Swamiji, it is not, definitely not, indubitably not. With firmest faith, he declares:—

“Bring forth the power of the Spirit, and pour it over the length and breadth of India, and all that is necessary will come by itself.

“Manifest the divinity within you, and everything will be harmoniously arranged around it”.²⁴⁵

Such was Swamiji's unfailing faith in Spirituality.

And, everyone, everyone without distinction is capable of attaining it—not a single honest effort goes in vain.

“We may die unknown, unpitied, unbewailed, without accomplishing anything—but not one thought will be lost. It will take effect, sooner or later”.^{245a}

What a great optimism! And, have we any right to disbelieve it through our own ignorance and temerity?

Thus, theoretically, such a Spirituality in Sociology is indeed the best of all sociological theories and also a unique one.

(2) PRACTICAL VALUE OF SWAMIJI'S SPIRITUALISTIC

SOCIALISM: HUMANISM

Secondly, practically, the Sociological theory of Swamiji is a kind of Humanism of a special kind. What does ordinary Humanism imply? It

implies *love of man*, but not necessarily *belief in man*. 'Men are weak and helpless, fallen and sinful ; so let us lend them a helping hand, and lead them from error to truth, from bad to good, from sin to virtue'—this is the idea behind such an ordinary Humanism.

But what is the idea behind Swamiji's Humanism? What does it imply? It implies, not only *love of man*, but also essentially, *belief in man*. Man is not weak, not helpless, not fallen, not sinful, but God Himself, so ever-strong, ever-pure, and ever-perfect. All these have been referred to above (p. 348 ff.). So, as social workers, as lovers of humanity, as humanists, we can never take man from error to truth, bad to good, sin to virtue, for—

"Man never progresses from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lesser truth to higher truth, but it is never from error to truth."²⁴⁶

Repeatedly, he emphasises this point.²⁴⁷

As pointed out above (p. 378 ff.), Swamiji's uniqueness lies in this—in refusing to start with the original sin of man. In most cases, Philosophy starts with this, and with that, also Ethics and Sociology. But never Swamiji, as one of the greatest philosophers, one of the most original thinkers of the world.

(i) "Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so."²⁴⁸

(ii) "Cut off the word *help* from your mind. You cannot help, it is blasphemy . . . You worship."²⁴⁹

These enthralling quotations will bear repetition and bring out clearly Swamiji's unique contributions to Sociology from the practical point.

(3) SWAMIJI'S OWN ESTIMATE: "I AM A SOCIALIST"

(a) "*I Love the Poor*"

Swamiji loved to call himself a Socialist: "*I am a Socialist*", this was his constant cry. In what sense, exactly, was he one? Let us take into account his own words:—

(i) "I am neither a caste-breaker, nor a mere social reformer. I have nothing to do directly with your castes, or with your social reformation. Live in any caste you like, but that is no reason why you should hate

another man or another caste. It is love and love alone that I preach, and I base my teaching on the great Vedantic Truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the Soul of the universe".²⁵⁰

(ii) "To the reformers, I would point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root-and-branch reform".²⁵¹

(iii) "I simply want to be like the squirrel in the building of Rama's bridge, who was quite content to put on the bridge his little quota of sand dust."²⁵²

(iv) "I am a *Sudra*, a *Mlechha*, so I have nothing to do with that botheration".²⁵³

"I am called a *Sudra* and am challenged as to what right a *Sudra* has to become a *Sannyasin* . . . But I am not at all hurt if they call me a *Sudra*. It will be a little reparation for the tyranny of my ancestors over the poor. If I am a Pariah I will be all the more glad, for, I am the disciple of a man who—the *Brahmana* of *Brahmanas*—wanted to cleanse the house of a Pariah".²⁵⁴

As shown above (p. 379), the terms *reform* and *reformer* were not at all to Swamiji's liking, for the following reasons:—

(i) The term *reform* implies external super-imposition, while the only thing that is possible here is internal growth or self-reform.

(ii) The term *reformer* implies (a) that the reformed person is a sinner ; (b) that the reformer wants to change the ancient customs *in toto*.

As we know (p. 376), Swamiji was vehemently opposed to the above two. But he was all for reforming the causes of our present degraded state, viz., greed and grandiosity, selfishness and sinfulness, maladies and miseries. If the causes be once destroyed, the effect, too, will take care of itself. That was Swamiji's aim.

The one central point in Swamiji's holy life was love for the poor and the oppressed—a kind of entirely *niskama*-love (p. 387).

"I am no metaphysician, no philosopher, nay, no saint. But I am poor. I love the poor."^{254a}

"*I love the poor*"—this is the sweetest refrain of Swamiji's sublime song of the soul. "*I love the poor*"—this was the most resounding slogan of his

noble life. "*I love the poor*"—this was the surest sign of his magnanimous character. "*I love the poor, I love the poor, I love the poor*"—this innermost cry of his heart echoed and re-echoed across the seas and beyond the hills. And, it is this great, pure love that made him declare vehemently:

"May I be born again and again and suffer a thousand miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum-total of all souls, and above all, my God, the wicked ; my God, the miserable ; my God, the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship."^{254b}

"I love the poor"—this, according to Swamiji, was his only description. We, also, fully agree. For, he was not a metaphysician, nor a philosopher ; nay, not even a saint—but a *human being*, in the truest sense of the term, i.e. in the sense preached by him, viz., that a human being is simply a Divine Being, human in form but divine in essence—"a divinity on earth, a Soul immortal, a Spirit free ; blest and eternal".²⁵⁵

(b) "My Mission"

(a) "My mission is to show that Religion is everything, and in everything".²⁵⁶

(b) "I, unworthy though I am, had one commission—to bring out the casket of jewels that was placed in my charge (i.e. Sri Ramakrishna's teachings) and make it over to you".²⁵⁷

(c) "Our mission is for the destitute, the poor and the illiterate peasantry and labouring classes ; and if every thing has been done for them first, and there is spare time, then only for the gentry".²⁵⁸

These three represent the inner core of Swamiji's mission. There is but a single mission of life—evidently, there cannot be more than one mission, for obvious reasons. For, if there be more than one mission, then life cannot be taken to be an organic whole, a real unity—as it really is. So, Swamiji's three apparently different missions really mean one and the same thing—viz., spread of Spiritualism amongst the masses, amongst all. For, Sri Ramakrishna's message to the world was nothing but Spiritualism, pure and simple. And, as we have seen, service of the poor and the oppressed is also so, according to Swamiji.

Thus we exhilaratingly end with the same central, inspiring message of Swamiji with which we lovingly started—*spiritualism* !

(3) SWAMIJI'S LAST HOPE AND BELIEF : RISE OF A NEW RENASCENT INDIA

How will there be the rise of a new, renascent India? This is the burning question of all socialists of India. Swamiji, though a great lover of ancient Indian culture, and though, on that count, sometimes misinterpreted and misrepresented, vehemently declares that the rise of the new renascent India will be on the graveyard of the so-called upper classes, and such a rise will be the rise of the so-called lower classes, i.e. the labouring classes of India. So, he directs the upper classes to disappear, leaving the arena to the resurgent labouring classes, so long held under bondage. Note his very strong and frank language, and also his intense feeling for the so-called *lower classes*—

“However much you may be strutting in the pride of your births, you, the upper classes of India—do you think that you are alive? You are but mummies, ten thousand years old! . . .

“Denizens of the Dreamland! Why are you loitering any longer? Fleshless and bloodless skeletons of the dead body of past India that you are—why do you not quickly reduce yourselves into dust and disappear in the air? . . .

“Skeletons of the past, there! Before you, are your successors, the India that is to be. Throw those treasure-chests of yours and those jewelled rings among them—as soon as you can ; and you—vanish into the air, and be seen no more, only keep your ears open. No sooner will you disappear, than will you hear the inaugurated shout of Renascent India—ringing with the voice of a million thunders and reverberating throughout the universe :

“*Wah Guru Ki Fate*”—“Victory to the Guru.”²⁵⁹

After this, who would not say that the very first assertion of Swamiji himself, viz., “*I am a Socialist*”—is one that is true, word by word! Who is a real Socialist? One who thinks, feels and wills for the whole society—not only for a few, but for all. And, who are the *all*? The *all* are the

masses, the non-stressed, oppressed, depressed masses, who are given a clarion call by Swamiji to come forward boldly to fill the places, vacated by the above antiquated "upper classes". Who else but a true socialist would have done so, and envisaged the rise of a new, renascent India out of the ashes of a dead and cremated aristocracy?

"You merge yourselves in the void and disappear, and let new India arise in your place. Let her arise—out of the peasant's cottage, grasping the plough; out of the huts of fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emerge from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from the groves and forests, from hills and mountains."²⁶⁰

"Amen"! With our whole heart we say "Amen"!.

And, finally, may we strive whole-heartedly to make true his great prophecy:

"First of all, make the soil ready, and thousands of Vivekanandas will in time be born into this world to deliver lectures on Religion."²⁶¹

May the great and good God give us strength!

"And repeat and pray day and night:—

'Oh Thou Lord of Gauri, O Thou Mother of the Universe! Vouchsafe manliness unto me! O Thou Mother of Strength! take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and—Make me a Man!'"²⁶²

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1b. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

3a. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 3.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

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7. C. W., VI, 3rd Edn., p. 340.

8. C. W., II, 5th Edn., p. 84.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

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13. C. W., IV, p. 303.
14. C. W., III, p. 242.
15. C. W., V, p. 39.
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26. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
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33. C. W., V, p. 127.
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45. *Caste, Culture & Socialism*, p. vi.
46. C. W., III, p. 167.
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50. C. W., VI, p. 285.
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58. C. W., IV, p. 218.
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68. C. W., IV, p. 330.
69. C. W., V, p. 25.
70. C. W., V, p. 19.
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79. C. W., III, p. 297, Cf. C. W., V, p. 144.
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89. C. W., II, p. 4.
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214. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
215. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
216. *C. W.*, IV, p. 308.
- 216a. *C. W.*, VII, p. 309.
- 216b. *C. W.*, V, p. 39.
217. *C. W.*, V, p. 45.
218. *C. W.*, VI, p. 287.
219. *C. W.*, III, p. 429.
220. *cf. C. W.*, III, p. 166.
221. *C. W.*, V, p. 153.
222. *C. W.*, V, p. 153.
223. *Ibid.*
224. *Ibid.*
225. *C. W.*, III, pp. 290-91.
226. *C. W.*, IV, p. 308.
227. *Ibid.*, p. 416.
228. *Ibid.*, p. 309.
229. *Ibid.*, *cf.*, V, p. 297 ; VI, 365.
230. *C. W.*, V, p. 25.
231. *C. W.*, VII, p. 147.
232. *C. W.*, V, p. 143.
233. *C. W.*, IV, p. 308.
- 233a. *C. W.*, VI, p. 386.
234. *C. W.*, V, p. 25.
235. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
236. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
237. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
238. *C. W.*, V, p. 45.
239. *Ibid.*, p. 298.
240. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
241. *Ibid.*
242. *Ibid.*
- 242a. *C. W.*, V, p. 132.
- 242b. *Tattiriya Upanishad*, 3-6.
243. *C. W.*, II, p. 167.
- 243a. *C. W.*, V, p. 39.
244. *C. W.*, V, p. 39.
245. *C. W.*, IV, p. 298.
- 245a. *C. W.*, V, p. 45.
246. *C. W.*, II, p. 363.
247. *cf.*, *C. W.*, II, 325 ; IV, 317 ; V, 132.

- 248. C. W., I, p. 9.
- 249. C. W., V, p. 172.
- 250. C. W., III, p. 194.
- 251. C. W., III, p. 213.
- 252. *Ibid.*
- 253. C. W., VI, p. 355.
- 254. C. W., III, p. 211.
- 254a. C. W., V, p. 45.
- 254b. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- 255. C. W., I, p. 49.
- 256. C. W., V, p. 132.
- 257. C. W., V, p. 305.
- 258. C. W., VI, p. 386.
- 259. C. W., VII, p. 310.
- 260. C. W., VII, p. 309.
- 261. C. W., V, p. 299.
- 262. C. W., IV, p. 413.

RAMAKRISHNA ORDER OF MONKS: A NEW ORIENTATION OF MONASTICISM

In April, 1898, Calcutta was visited by the plague. The scourge was not new in Calcutta, for it had occurred earlier also and people knew too well about the ravages that it might work. Naturally there was great panic and people began to flee leaving their dear ones dying or dead. The civic services completely broke down and the streets were piled with garbage. Calcutta, never too elegant a place, became ghastly. The military took over control and imposed certain regulations, but this made confusion worse confounded. People became more panicky and they suffered untold hardship.

At this juncture they woke up one morning to see a sight that took their breath away! A band of monks accompanied by a white woman was going about visiting every home, inquiring about its needs and giving it such help and encouragement as it needed. They tended the sick and removed the dead bodies that had been lying putrefying. The same monks also removed the garbage and swept the streets.

This was a sight they had never seen before, an experience they had never thought possible. They had known monks as persons who concerned themselves only with spiritual affairs. Monks who cared for the physical well-being of others, they had never known. This behaviour of the monks must have provoked much comment, some appreciative and some even disparaging. Disparagement is quite understandable, for this was something unusual, something almost without a precedent—monks meddling with problems like disease, in other words, with mundane affairs.

However much the incident might have excited curiosity and comment, few people then grasped its significance. As it happened, this marked the birth of a new movement, a new ideology, in the field of religion; in particular, it marked the rise of a new order of monks—the Ramakrishna Order, for it is to that Order that the monks referred to above belonged and this was also one of the first instances in which they had come forward publicly to help those in distress. Swami Vivekananda, their leader, had talked of

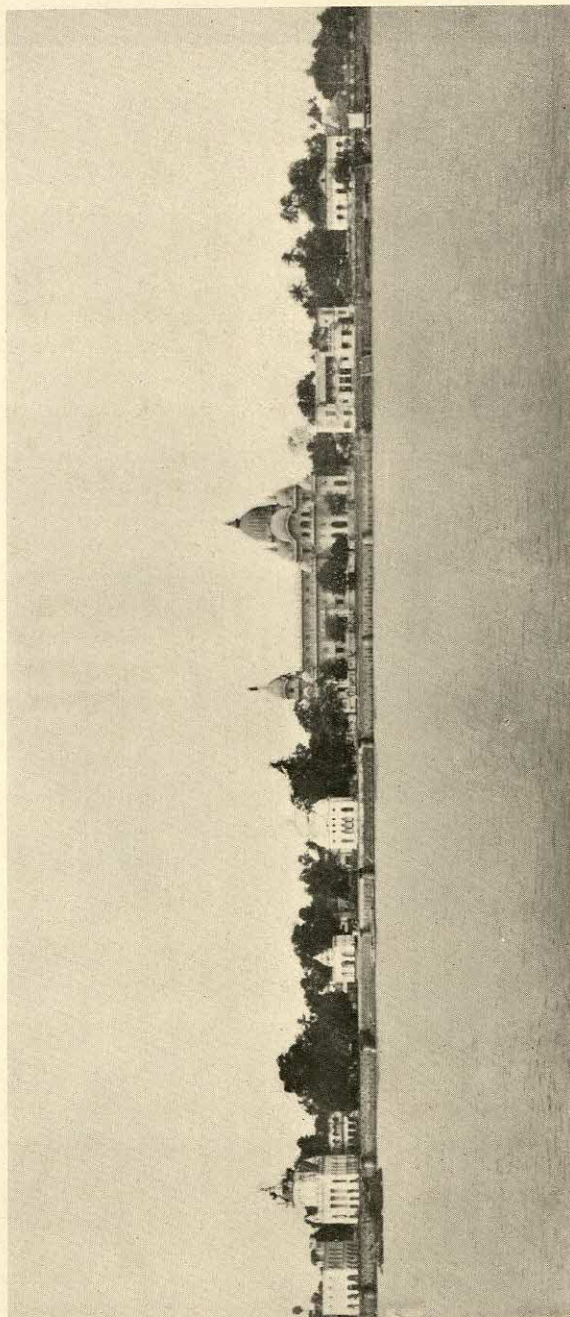
practical Vedanta, of serving man as one would serve God and here was a demonstration of how that fine teaching could be put into practice. Swami Vivekananda himself was not with these monks, but it was at his bidding that the monks undertook this work. He was then very ill and completely exhausted as a result of the most exacting programme of tours and lectures that he had been having ever since his return from the West. He had gone to Darjeeling under medical advice, and in its cool climate and with the rest that he was having, he was already feeling better. Just then word was received about the outbreak of the plague in Calcutta and the chaos and the hardship that had come in its wake. It was impossible for Swami Vivekananda to continue his holiday at Darjeeling. Against medical advice, and his health still shattered, he rushed back to Calcutta to try and see what he could do to help the people.

When he broached the subject, a doubting Thomas asked, 'But, Sir, what are you going to do about funds?' A very practical question perhaps, but Swami Vivekananda had not the patience to explain how he was going to raise the necessary funds. He thundered back saying, "I'll sell the *math*—(monastery at Belur), if necessary." Thank God, it was not necessary for him to take this extreme step. Money did flow in—enough to carry on the work, and fortunately for everybody, the epidemic subsided before long, before much damage had been done.

II

Swami Vivekananda has made many contributions in many fields, but that which will go down in history as perhaps his greatest is this new Order of monks. By creating it he has given monasticism a new meaning, a new dimension,—and a new dignity. He has, incidentally, revitalized Hinduism, also ; he has at least brought it down from its ivory tower and made it come to grips with the realities of life.

But it is not Hinduism alone that this Order of monks is serving ; it is serving other religions also, for Shri Ramakrishna whom it represents came not to uphold one particular creed or dogma ; he came to strengthen religion itself. The Ramakrishna Order is not committed to any particular



BELUR MATH

Swamiji's Temple	Holy Mother Temple	Swami Brahmananda Temple	Sri Ramakrishna Temple	Swamiji's Room
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creed, community or country : it stands for humanity itself. Its source of strength is its universalism, its readiness to accept every thought, every emotion that comes from the pure spirit of man.

How Swami Vivekananda came to found this Order is an interesting story well worth being told. It is said that some time before his teacher, Shri Ramakrishna, passed away, he had charged him to look after his 'children' (disciples). He had not specifically said what exactly he wanted him to do, or if he did, it is not on record. One can only guess and say he probably meant that Swami Vivekananda was to help them develop their spiritual life, and also forge them into an Order of monks—an Order which would reflect best the spirit and message of Shri Ramakrishna.

It is not clear if Swami Vivekananda was aware of this intention of his teacher. Probably not, for there is no evidence that he understood the real implication of the task entrusted to him. He probably thought that all he was required to do was to see that his brother disciples never ceased to struggle for God-realization. He was to keep the fire of renunciation blazing in them, and guide and help them as best he could. What else could he do then, himself a young man very much entangled in the affairs of the world?

It is more than probable that neither Swami Vivekananda nor his brother disciples were conscious that Shri Ramakrishna wanted that they should take to monastic life. They were vaguely conscious of a great spiritual hunger within them,—that is all. This was shapeless and without a focus, and they did not know what to do. Shri Ramakrishna, however, knew that these young men were going to be different from others. In his quiet and unobtrusive way he slowly prepared them for the great life of renunciation that they would later embrace.

He not only prepared them for monastic life, he also saw to it that they might later form into an Order. One might say that it was he who really laid the foundation of this Order of monks. He selected the young men, trained them rigorously and then bound them together with such ties of love that they would never fall apart. He himself was love personified (as Swami Vivekananda later remarked) and this love he transmitted to others also, to an extent that whether he had expressly asked them to or not,

they loved one another intensely and they knew and felt that their destinies were intertwined. He taught them also to look upon Swami Vivekananda as their leader. He also trained Swami Vivekananda to fit this role.

Nevertheless, neither Swami Vivekananda nor his brother disciples had any idea about being monks or having an Order of their own. It was by an accident that they decided that they would be monks and form an Order. They were on a visit to Antpore, Swami Premananda's birth-place, having been asked there by his mother. One night they had built a fire and were sitting round it meditating. After a while, they fell to talking about Jesus Christ, his great renunciation, his love of God, his spirit of surrender, and so on. Naturally, Swami Vivekananda took the leading part in the discussion. His eloquence so enthralled them that for the time being they were not aware of anything else. It was quite some time before the spell was broken and they began to talk about other matters. It seemed strange to them that Christ had possessed them so. When they discovered that it was the night of December 24, they felt the coincidence had a meaning and suggested their own future life. Then and there they resolved that like Christ's disciples they would also renounce everything for their master and form an Order. This was the first time that the thought occurred to them or at any rate, found a vocal expression.

Prior to this, they had of course started a sort of a monastery, for they had a rented house where some of them lived like monks for all practical purposes. They all now went and joined this monastery. They also completed those formalities which mark one's admission to monastic vows. After this some continued to live there, while others began to roam about from one holy place to another. Wherever they were, their only concern was how to realize God. They had been taught by their master that this was the highest goal of life. They, therefore, concentrated on it. They often starved, often did not have enough to wear. It did not matter. What mattered was whether they were trying hard enough to realize God or not. It was Shri Ramakrishna's memory that kept tugging at them and telling them to renounce and strive harder for God. Then there was also their leader who constantly urged them to put everything they could command into their effort to realize God.

III

It is necessary to know these details, for otherwise the significance of the Ramakrishna Order would not be understood. It should be noted that God-realization is the sole object of its monks. Shri Ramakrishna's example of how God should be sought was and is their source of inspiration. If they have left home and hearth and if they have neglected their family duties and obligations, it is not out of any sense of defeatism or escapism. They love God more than they love their dear ones—that is the only explanation. Most of them come from cultured homes and have had a fair amount of education. Some come from very affluent families. There can be no question of financial difficulty being any reason for their running away from home. None of them chose this life because they had suffered disappointment. They chose this life because the urge for God-realization was so great that they never bothered about their future.

Monasticism is not new in India, perhaps it is as old as India herself. But this is the first time after Buddha that there is organised monasticism again, and that young men, who are educated and come of good families, are being drawn to it. This is a fact of historical importance, for this is likely to have a tremendous impact on Indian society and culture. If it is accepted that Shri Ramakrishna represents Hinduism at its best, then the importance of this monastic Order will be appreciated. As already mentioned, Swami Vivekananda created this monastic Order in order to preserve and practise Shri Ramakrishna's teachings. Some stray individuals might practise his teachings, but that would not have ensured their continuity. It was necessary that there should be an organized band of men who would dedicate themselves to the practice and interpretation of those teachings. The point that is to be particularly stressed about the Ramakrishna Order, as indeed about the whole Ramakrishna movement, is that it is progressive. It accepts science and scientific thinking but does not discard Indian spiritual traditions. It thinks that it is possible to combine the two,—in fact, it advocates this to be the need of the hour, this combination of Western science and Indian spirituality. For many centuries monasticism in India had become a byword of always looking backward and always turning its face against

anything new. To this may be attributed the soporific condition which marked Hinduism for many centuries after Sankara. Somehow or other it had failed to meet the challenge of the new times. It had lost its old vigour and its spirit of enterprise with the result that it ceased to progress. There were many monks and monastic orders, but few of them really represented the Hindu spirit which is essentially a spirit of adventure, a spirit of never being content with what one knows but always trying to know more, trying new thoughts, new forms, while remaining true to what is fundamental.

With the decline of monasticism, Hinduism itself had declined. The Hindu masses of India have always had their education on Hinduism from roving monks. This is why in spite of widespread illiteracy in India, the Hindus know their religion so well. But if the monks who are their teachers, are themselves ignorant, how can they teach the masses? If only for the continuity of Hinduism, it was necessary that a new Order of monks should have come into being.

In many ways, the Ramakrishna Order is perhaps best suited to meet the challenge of the time. It does not discard the old values because they are old ; similarly, it does not rush for the new ones because they are new. It makes a fine balance of the two, choosing only that which is essential. Most of its monks have had some English education, but they also study Sanskrit and have profound respect for ancient traditions. Swami Vivekananda used to say that India should try to acquire Western efficiency while staying rooted in the spiritual traditions of India. This is exactly what the monks of the Ramakrishna Order try to do. They recognize, as Swami Vivekananda himself did, the West's great success in raising the standards of life through the application of scientific principles. They contrast this with the economic backwardness of India and realize that the only solution to the problem is through science and its application. This is why they place the highest premium on the study of science. But in doing so they do not forget for a moment to stress the importance of studying Sanskrit which holds the key to ancient wisdom. They believe India's—indeed the world's—salvation lies in the combination of the two.

It may be asked: But why should monks bother if the country is economically backward? How does it concern them? The reply to this is that

in India there is no dichotomy—the spiritual and the mundane ; here it is stressed that truth is essentially one—spiritual—and it looks different according to the plane from which you see it. Indian seers have stressed that spiritual wisdom or God-realization is at the apex of all achievements by man, and he should direct all his efforts so as to reach this final and supreme goal of life. But this is not to say that he can afford to neglect his temporal duties, for whatever he does either takes him nearer to this goal or away from it. He can neglect his so-called temporal duties only at peril to his spiritual advancement. It is, therefore, necessary that India's poverty should be liquidated before anything can be done to teach her religion effectively.

IV

As has already been stated, God-realization is the sole object of the monks of the Ramakrishna Order. Yet they run schools, colleges and hospitals ; they teach agriculture, arts and crafts ; they edit magazines, write books and make speeches ; they manage offices, keep accounts and handle correspondence. They do these things with great zeal and devotion. They have also a reputation of being very efficient in their work. But, one may ask, if they are people who are seeking God, why should they then do these things? These are things which do not concern God at all ; if anything, they make one forget God. They should be avoided as far as possible, for, if monks are constantly occupied with such things as in fact they are, how are they going to realize God? By spending their time in this way, are they not hindering their spiritual progress? If they meant to live this kind of life, why did they leave their homes at all?

The answer is that the monks do these things in a spirit of worship. Their aim is to realize God and the work they are doing is only a means to that end. A monk may pray, read the scriptures, visit holy places ; these are the traditional occupations of a monk. Swami Vivekananda had nothing against these traditional occupations, but he wanted to add selfless service to this list. He used to say that this was as efficacious as other disciplines. He would go further and say that this was the best form of worship for this age. As a wandering monk he had had opportunity to study how most

monks spent their time. He felt it was possible for them to spend their time better. Only very few gifted souls can spend their entire time in meditation. Others have to make a compromise by combining work with worship. If that work is good and if it is done selflessly, i.e., without any expectation of return, then, according to Swami Vivekananda, it is as good as worship. In any case, God-realization is good, but better still is to serve others after God-realization. On the same logic, to strive for God-realization is good, but if this is combined with selfless service, it is still better.

But Swami Vivekananda warned that service to others should be rendered with love, with utmost humility. There is no question of anyone feeling superior because he was able to help others. He should feel privileged that he was able to help and his help was being accepted. He should thank those who accepted his help. He must not expect that those who received his help should thank him. The whole idea centres round the proposition that God is manifest everywhere, in particular in men, and if we serve men we serve God Himself. In serving men we must not make any distinction. Even the worst of men should receive from us respectful treatment, for they also have God in them—they are also God. Those who are seeking God may worship at temples and churches, but they will also have the same results if they treat their fellowmen with the love and respect they usually give to God.

Swami Vivekananda, however, owed to Shri Ramakrishna this love for fellowmen, the love which later became a passion with him. He was not at first interested in the affairs of others and was concerned only about his own welfare, when an incident took place in which Shri Ramakrishna told him pointedly what should be his foremost concern in life. It is said that he often pestered Shri Ramakrishna for some sort of spiritual experience. This went on for long, but Shri Ramakrishna always put him off on one plea or another. Once Swami Vivekananda was very insistent and refused to be put off. Rather annoyed, Shri Ramakrishna asked, 'What exactly do you want?' Swami Vivekananda replied that he wanted a state of complete absorption in God. He would be so completely absorbed in Him that he would even forget that he had a body. Only once in a while he would eat a little so as to keep himself alive. It was to be expected that Shri Rama-

krishna, who always stressed the importance of God-realization and was himself often lost in God-consciousness, would be pleased to hear this reply from his disciple. Instead, he was almost indignant. He said, 'Fie on you! I thought you were meant for a better and nobler role. I find I was mistaken. You seem to be concerned about your own salvation only. You are just like the others, selfish and caring for your own spiritual progress only.' Shri Ramakrishna then mentioned what he expected of him. He said, "I thought you would be like a big banyan tree standing on the roadside so that travellers worn out with fatigue and sun might come and take shelter under you. Instead, I find, you are thinking of your own interests only and you have no thought for others."

This admonition must have gone home, for later we find Swami Vivekananda saying that if he had to be born a million times to provide food for a hungry dog, he would not care.

This is not a mere sentiment, this is an attitude of mind born of a deep personal experience. According to the Hindus, a stage comes in one's spiritual life when all distinctions disappear, when one finds no difference between the rich and the poor, the good and the bad, the high and the low. Shri Ramakrishna used to illustrate this by a simile. He often said, 'When you get on to the top of a mountain, everything down below looks flat and even to you. All differences in level disappear.' The same thing happens when a man rises to the peak of his spiritual development. He is then aware of only 'one' and not 'many'. The unity of existence is then a fact to him. If there is pain anywhere, he feels it as if it is his own pain ; similarly with pleasure and other experiences. In this connection, one recalls Shri Ramakrishna's own experience in the incident in which a boatman assaulted his younger brother. Shri Ramakrishna who merely saw the incident felt as if he himself had been beaten. He cried out with pain and his back bore marks of the assault. This shows how real one's feeling of oneness with others can be. This sharing of the experiences of others is said to be the highest spiritual development that one can aspire to. But this sharing can and should be in the reverse order also. That is to say, if you have something which others have not got, you should welcome them to share it. If you do not, you are then practising deceit, as Swami Vivekananda would put it.

Thus, the novelty about the Ramakrishna Order is that it preaches not only God-realization, but also service to humanity. Be God and make others also God—this was the message of Swami Vivekananda. The Ramakrishna Order tries to follow this message as far as possible. Its first concern is God-realization. Service is a means to that end.

Many question if it is possible to combine the two. They argue that this is an exotic idea Swami Vivekananda has imported from the West. When he visited Western countries he was probably impressed by their achievements in the field of social services. Perhaps he also felt distressed that they were sadly missing in India. He was, therefore, anxious to see these started in India, even if in a rudimentary form. He did not know to whom he could appeal to start these activities, so he asked the monks to do it. But he knew they would not be interested unless they saw in it some sort of religious purpose. He was, therefore, at pains to prove what an important role social service could play in one's spiritual life. By this he was only making a virtue of a necessity.

It will be interesting to note that doubt persisted as to the relevance of social service to spiritual life for many years even after it had been formally accepted as a creed by the Ramakrishna Order. First of all, monks of other Orders looked askance at it; they thought it could not be reconciled with the Indian idea of monasticism. There were others, again, who thought this was a complete departure from what Shri Ramakrishna had taught. One such person once visited Varanasi and saw how at the hospital run by the Ramakrishna Mission there, monks slaved day and night at work which even the lowest in society would not care to do. Shocked, he openly expressed the view that this was inconsistent with the teachings of Shri Ramakrishna. As the person was one for whom the monks had the highest respect, they were naturally very much confused. It so happened that Mother Sarada Devi was then at Varanasi. It was, therefore, decided to refer the matter to her, as it was believed she knew Shri Ramakrishna's mind more than anybody else. She unequivocally replied that the work, if done in the right spirit, was certainly conducive to spiritual growth. She also declared that this was in complete conformity with Shri Ramakrishna's teachings. On this occasion she paid a visit to the hospital and, as a token

of her appreciation, paid a small contribution to the hospital fund also. This put a stop to all controversy in this regard.

If further proof is necessary, one might then mention Shri Ramakrishna's conduct when he visited Deoghar with his friend and disciple, Mathur Babu. A severe famine was then raging at Deoghar and people were in famished condition. Shri Ramakrishna whose only concern was God and who took little interest in anything else, was very much touched by the sight. He asked Mathur Babu to supply food and other essential needs to the people. At first, Mathur Babu was unwilling, but, later, at Shri Ramakrishna's insistence, he complied with the request.

This gives some idea how Shri Ramakrishna felt when he saw hunger and hardship around him. Although a man whose mind was completely steeped in God, he was not indifferent to the sufferings of others. He used to say that religion was out of question when the stomach was empty. It is, therefore, inconceivable that an Order of monks which professes to follow his teachings should be indifferent to the sufferings of people around it. Swami Vivekananda, therefore, rightly stressed the importance of social service. In this he only followed in the footsteps of his master. The Ramakrishna Order, also, by putting a premium on social service, is only keeping up that tradition.

While service is its motto, the Ramakrishna Order is sensible enough to vary its form of service according to the needs of the place where it functions. In India and other Asiatic countries, its services are chiefly medical and educational ; in Western countries, its services are entirely cultural and spiritual. A time may come when Asiatic countries will be able to do without its services in the fields of education and health. The State will perhaps manage them. Even then there will be scope for it to do much—in the East as well as in the West. It will then be able to concentrate on its cultural and spiritual work. Already it is doing much in these respects. There are certain ideas it represents which are of the utmost value. For instance, the idea of the divinity of man, that 'each soul is potentially divine', to put it in the language of Swami Vivekananda. It is a unique idea almost unknown in other countries, but even in India, the country of its origin, it has not been known to many, and of course, was never practised. If this idea is

accepted, it will go far to improve human relations. The present atmosphere of hatred and bitterness will go ; in its place there will be an atmosphere of respect and good will.

Another idea is about serving man as one serves God Himself. If we learn to treat man with the respect and humility we show to God, the world will be a different place from what it is now. Shri Ramakrishna, as is well-known, laid the greatest stress on tolerance. The Ramakrishna Order also has practised tolerance throughout its history. It is tolerant not only in the matter of religious thoughts and practices, but also in other matters where there is room for controversy and conflict. It is remarkable that in recent times when India has been a scene of many clashes over questions of language, religion or cultural and political rights, and large groups of people have been drawn into them, monks of the Ramakrishna Order have always kept aloof from them. They represent a cross-section of men of different nationalities, but the way they maintain their solidarity and steadfastly follow their ideals and carry on their activities in the midst of the confusion and excitement that go on around them, is indeed remarkable. The world needs most today this detachment and this tolerance. In so far as the monks of the Ramakrishna Order are practising these virtues they are helping to ease the tensions which now bedevil all human relationships. In the present context of a world torn with conflicts this is an important contribution to the cause of peace and fellowship.

Shri Ramakrishna, as is well-known, was equally at home with people of different religious persuasions. Often these people quarrelled among themselves, but he had no quarrel with them. He, in fact, tried to bring them closer to one another by making light of their differences. Swami Vivekananda also did the same thing while dealing with other religions and cultures. Whenever he came across a phenomenon of genuine moral and spiritual significance, he promptly acknowledged it and showed it the respect it deserved, no matter how alien and bizarre it might look at first sight. Nothing was to him too small, too insignificant, for appreciation.

It was exactly this spirit which made Swami Vivekananda popular wherever he went in the West. He had often to defend Hinduism and India in

vigorous language ; it is remarkable that in doing so, he never attacked others. He did not represent any particular creed or dogma ; it is doubtful if he represented any country, either. What he represented was the universal spirit of man. When he spoke on Hinduism he mentioned only those aspects of it which might be called the common property of all religions. It was never his intention to convert anybody to a particular way of worship. He only wanted that a Christian should be a better Christian, a Moslem a better Moslem, a Hindu a better Hindu, and so on. He wanted to improve the lot of man irrespective of the religious or political label that he might have on him. As a means to this he wanted that there should develop a spirit of give and take among the nations. No country, according to him, could feel that it had enough and had nothing to take from others. He wanted that India should learn science and technology from the West ; but he also wanted that the West should learn spirituality from India. In this connection, it is necessary to point out that he was concerned for mankind as a whole and not for a particular country or a nation. 'Man, the only God I believe in'—this aptly epitomizes his attitude in this respect. As a monk, he would refuse to be identified with a particular country or community. His special love for India was because of her great heritage. He thought this heritage could do much good to the world. He was anxious to preserve it, as much for the sake of the world as for the sake of India.

It is exactly in this spirit—this spirit of a world citizen—that the monks of the Ramakrishna Order work. They are scattered in many parts of the globe, but wherever they are, they are perfectly at home. They are welcomed and supported by local people because of their great catholicity, their readiness to accept the culture of the place and to enrich it further by their own culture. They do not claim they have something superior to teach—superior to what people already know. Humbly and respectfully, they only try to draw the attention of the people to the wisdom of India. In doing so they are careful not to hurt their pride ; they do so only to help them compare notes and pick up from it whatever is missing in their own knowledge and experience. There is no question of their feeling superior, for it often happens that in trying to teach they also learn a great deal.

They are anxious to serve, serve as best they can, without any ulterior motive, but with the sole object that they can themselves 'be God' and help others also to 'be God'.

Thus, in ideas as well as activities, the Ramakrishna Order represents a departure from traditional monasticism. Never before in the history of India has monasticism been so actively associated with the fight against social injustice ; never before has it been able to rise above the limitations of race, creed and language to an extent as now ; never before has it been so completely, so tirelessly, dedicated to the cause of human welfare ; never before has it been so progressive and so active a force towards the unity of mankind.

MONASTICISM—OLD AND NEW

In dealing with the Ramakrishna Order of Monks, founded by Swami Vivekananda it may be useful to bear in mind that a system of corporate life adopted by persons who retire from the world is a very old institution. We hear of solitary asceticism practised in Egypt, and the monastic life was fully developed amongst the Vedic Rishis, in Buddhism, and amongst the Essenes.¹ 'Under the Christian dispensation, solitary asceticism was illustrated by St. Anthony'. In the Christian religion, it was St. Basil who prescribed a common life under one roof ; and, of course, we are aware of Saint Benedict who laid down the triple rule of poverty, chastity and obedience to superiors. These monastic institutions were the main agency in Europe before and just after the Middle Ages for preserving learning and research. It was as a later development that social service including the relief of poverty, disease and bodily suffering was adopted by individuals and monastic institutions.

The history of such institutions in India has been an illustrious one and the *Bodhisattva* ideal furnished a noble example and gave life and form to Indian monasticism. All subsequent developments may be said to originate in that ideal. The Vedantic ideal of the *Brahma Sakshatkara* was a potent ideal for the transformation of the personality of man who thereby rises above all passions and prejudices, self-seeking and egoism being annihilated thereby. The pain of other persons becomes one's own and their troubles are his. Universal interest and the abolition of personal and private points of view are the result of such realisation. Under the *Madhyamika* and *Vijnanavada* systems of Buddhism, there was developed the doctrine of *Mahakaruna* or great compassion which was the outward expression of the ideal. In the region of morals, persons performed certain charitable and beneficial acts either for bringing about social solidarity or some benefit to accrue in the other world. The *Arhat* or the *Jivanmukta* or the perfect *sannyasi* represents the climax of this discipline. The *Prajna Paramita* treatises seek to replace this *Arhat* or Yogic ideal by that of the *Bodhisattva*. The *Arhat* or the *Yogi* is on the quest for the cessation of

the suffering and *Nirvana*. The *Bodhisattva* ideal proceeds on the basis of the unity of all beings and insists not on his own salvation but on the salvation of all. He shuns the final stage of *Nirvana* though fully entitled to it, and prefers, by his own free choice, to toil for the sake of other beings. His objective is motiveless altruism. It is not only intellectual intuition that he strives for, but *Karuna* or active principle of compassion. The state of mind of the *Bodhisattva* is called the *Bodhichitta*. It has special relevance to the problems of the present-day world and it hopes to make for happy human relationships and universal solidarity. The conception of *Paramita* included *dana* (charity), *shila* (moral restraint), *shanti* (forbearance) and *dhyana* (meditation).

In Ramakrishna Paramahansa, by a unique synthesis, the Vedantic and Bodhisattvik ideals were combined. Intermixed in his life were the too often separable attainments, namely, that of profound and unlimited *bhakti* towards an *Ishtadevata*, and the achievement of absolute detachment and absorption in the Supreme through a *samadhi* perfected by *bhakti* but transcending the sublimation of the Self.

When Ramakrishna Paramahansa met Narendra Nath Datta (the Swami Vivekananda of the future), he discerned his great and creative attributes. As Romain Rolland says in his *Life of Ramakrishna*, his judgment was a sound one: "He needed a strong body, a bodyguard of workers and the head to command them in addition to a great heart charged with love for the whole world. He chose a wayward tormented and storm-tossed Narendra and made him the future leader." At the very first interview with Narendra Ramakrishna Paramahansa fell into a trance and made the choice of his first disciple. The initial reaction of Narendra Nath was one of opposition, but he added: "He may be mad but he may be worthy of respect". He left Dakshineswar in a confusion of thought; but even in the first words of Ramakrishna Paramahansa after his trance, he settled for Narendra Nath Dutt the duty of social service to which he was to devote his life and which distinguished him from other seers.

As Romain Rolland puts it: "A new life began for him. He knew and believed, and his faith born in misery, never forgot the taste of bread soaked in tears nor his suffering brethren".^{1a} Narendra Nath suddenly

attained *samadhi* soon afterwards, but his Master told him that "this highest realization must hereafter remain under lock and key. You should not stay absorbed in personal joy. You will bring spiritual consciousness to men and assuage the misery of the humble and the poor." As has been justly remarked, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa did not communicate any precise faith, but he did undoubtedly communicate the energy necessary for faith. He was a spiritual dynamo. Sri Ramakrishna often said: "Divine incarnations can always achieve knowledge of the Absolute in *samadhi*. At the same time, they can come down from the heights so that they may love the Lord as father and mother."

The Master transferred all his powers to the disciple before his release from life and Swami Vivekananda and his fellow disciples, without any resources except that of hope and profound faith, started the first Math or Monastery for the disciples. He who had been Narendra Nath Datta became Swami Vivekananda. He insisted, in this Monastery, on a study of comparative religion, science, history and sociology. He also laid before his fellow disciples the duty of working for the redemption of the world. This new Monastic Order has been described as unique and as containing, within itself, the energy of faith of the East and the West. Not only did it unite an encyclopaedic study of the sciences with religious meditation but the ideal of contemplation was wedded to the ideal of human service. Persons of the Ramakrishna Order were not allowed to shut themselves up within the walls of the Monastery. They had to wander through the world as mendicant monks. Swami Vivekananda once stated: "I sat at the feet of one whose life and whose teachings were a living commentary on the Upanishads, who united the intellect of Sankara with the heart of Chaitanya". In the words of Sri Aurobinda, he sought to realise God in the service of the outcast, the down-trodden and the poor.

The story of Swami Vivekananda's life has been often told and it is needless to refer to the revelation that came to him at Cape Comorin, to his wanderings among the rich and the poor all over India, to his great resolve seconded by discerning souls like the Maharajah of Mysore and the Rajas of Ramnad and Khetri to participate in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, and to his triumphant success at that gathering and there-

after in all countries, East and West. It may be instructive to cull from his own writings and speeches passages which formulate and describe the new Orientation of Monasticism which was exemplified by the Ramakrishna Order. In one of his Indian lectures entitled *Vedanta in its Application to Indian life*,² he pleads for fearlessness and strength. He says: "Look upon every man and woman as God. You cannot help anyone. You can only serve. Give up the idea that by ruling over others, you can do any good. The poor and the miserable are for our salvation so that we may serve the Lord coming in the shape of the diseased, the lunatic, the leper and the sinner". Again, in a lecture entitled *The Work before Us*,² he said: "Our religion never conquered, never shed blood. Here and here alone were the ideals of toleration first preached. Here and here alone the Hindu built mosques for Mohammedans and churches for Christians. The best work that you do for yourselves is when you work for others". To a Madras audience he said³: "We must not forget that what I mean by spiritual thought is the sending out of life-giving principles, not the superstition that we often hug to our breasts".

In a remarkable letter written from Chicago in 1894 to the Maharaja of Mysore, Swami Vivekananda makes the following appeal which may be reproduced:⁴

"The one thing that is at the root of all evils in India is the condition of the poor. The poor in the West are devils; compared to them ours are angels, and it is therefore so much the easier to raise our poor. The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, *to develop their lost individuality*. That is the great task between our people and princes. Up to now nothing has been done in that direction. Priest-power and foreign conquest have trodden them down for centuries and at last the poor of India have forgotten that they are human beings. They are to be given ideas; their eyes are to be opened to what is going on in the world around them and then they will work out their own salvation. Every nation, every man and every woman, must work out their own salvation. Give them ideas—that is the only help they require, and then the rest must follow as the effect. Ours is to put the chemicals together, the crystallisation comes in the law of nature. Our duty is to put ideas into their heads, they will do the

rest. This is what is to be done in India. It is this idea that has been in my mind for a long time. I could not accomplish it in India and that was the reason of my coming to this country. The great difficulty in the way of educating the poor is this. Supposing even Your Highness opens a free school in every village, still it would do no good, for the poverty of India is such that the poor boys would rather go to help their fathers in the fields, or otherwise try to make a living, than come to the school. Now if the mountain does not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain. If the poor boy cannot come to education, education must go to him. There are thousands of simple-minded, self-sacrificing Sannyasins in our own country, going from village to village, teaching religion. If some of them can be organised as teachers of secular things also, they will go from place to place, from door to door, not only preaching but teaching also. Suppose two of these men go to a village in the evening with a camera, a globe, some maps, etc. They can teach a great deal of astronomy and geography to the ignorant. By telling stories about different nations, they can give the poor a hundred times more information through the ear than they can get in a life time through books. This requires an organisation which, again, means money. Men there are enough in India to work out this plan, but alas, they have no money. It is very difficult to set a wheel in motion, but when once set, it goes on with increasing velocity. After seeking help in my own country and failing to get any sympathy from the rich, I came over to this country through Your Highness' aid. The Americans do not care a bit whether the poor of India die or live. And why should they, when our own people never think of anything but their own selfish ends?"

Interviewed by the *Madras Times* in February, 1897, the Swami insisted that the cause of India's downfall was the neglect of the masses. He added: "No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses of India are well educated, well fed and well cared for." It was during this interview that the Swami stated as follows: "I want to start two institutions for educating missionaries to be both spiritual and secular instructors." He added that "the national ideals of India are renunciation and service".

In an Appeal⁵ on behalf of the Belur Math, Swami Vivekananda stated as follows:

"The success which attended the labours of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in diffusing the principles of Hindu religion and obtaining some respect for our much abused faith from the West, gave rise to the hope of training a number of young Sannyasins to carry on the propaganda, both in and out of India. And an attempt is being made to educate a number of young men according to the Vedic principle of students living in touch with the Guru.

"A Math has already been started on the Ganges near Calcutta, through the kindness of some European and American friends.

"The work, to produce any visible results in a short time, requires funds and hence this appeal to those who are in sympathy with our efforts.

"It is intended to extend the operations of the Math by educating in the Math as many young men as the funds can afford, in both Western science and Indian spirituality, so that in addition to the advantages of a University education, they will acquire a manly discipline by living in contact with their teachers.

"The central Math near Calcutta will gradually start branches in other parts of the country as men become ready and the means are forthcoming.

"It is a work which will take time to bring forth any permanent result and requires a great deal of sacrifice on the part of our young men and on those who have the means of helping this work.

"We believe the men are ready, and our appeal therefore is to those who really love their religion and their country and have the means to show their sympathy practically by helping the cause".

In another Appeal⁶ on behalf of the Ramakrishna Home of Service, Banaras, Swami Vivekananda said :

"In these days of intellectual awakening and steadily assertive public opinion, the Holy places of the Hindus, their condition and method of work have not escaped the keen eye of criticism ; and this city, being the holy of holies to all Hindus, has not failed to attract its full share of censure.

"In other sacred places people go to purify themselves from sin, and their connection with these places is casual, and of a few days' duration. In this, the most ancient and living centre of Aryan religious activity, there come men and women, and, as a rule, old and decrepit, waiting to pass into

Eternal Freedom, through the greatest of all sanctifications, death under the shadow of the temple of the Lord of the Universe.

“And then there are those who have renounced everything for the good of the world, and have for ever lost the helping hand of their own flesh and blood and childhood’s associations.

“They too are overtaken by the common lot of humanity, physical evil in the form of disease.

“It may be true that some blame attaches to the management of the place. It may be true that the priests deserve a good part of the sweeping criticism generally heaped upon them ; yet, we must not forget the great truth—like people, like priests. If the people stand by with folded hands and watch the swift current of misery rushing past their doors, dragging men, women and children, the Sannyasin and the house-holder, into one common whirlpool of helpless suffering, and make not the least effort to save any from the current, only waxing eloquent at the misdoings of the priests of the holy places, not one particle of suffering can ever be lessened, not one ever be helped.

“Do we want to keep up the faith of our forefathers in the efficacy of the Eternal City of Shiva towards salvation?

“If we do, we ought to be glad to see the number of those increase from year to year who come here to die.

“And blessed be the name of the Lord that the poor have this eager desire for salvation, the same as ever.

“The poor who come here to die have voluntarily cut themselves off from any help they could have received in the places of their birth, and when disease overtakes them, their condition we leave to your imagination and to your conscience as a Hindu, to feel and to rectify.

“Brother, does it not make you pause and think of the marvellous attraction of this wonderful place of preparation for final rest? Does it not strike you with a mysterious sense of awe—this age-old and never-ending stream of pilgrims marching to salvation through death?”.

The best and accurate definition of the fructifying ideals which led to the formation of the Ramakrishna Order of Monks and brought about a new orientation of monastic ideals is outlined in a remarkable letter sent

by Swami Vivekananda on the 24th January, 1894, from Chicago. He says, "I do not require any help from India. I have plenty here. My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now, and then decide. We are to put the chemicals together, the crystallisation will be done by nature according to her laws. Work hard, be steady and have faith in the Lord. Set to work, I am coming sooner or later. Keep the motto before you, "Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion".⁷

Margaret Noble, later on known as Sister Nivedita, was one of those who appreciated to the full and completely realized the outlook of Swami Vivekananda. To quote from *The Life of Nivedita* by Lizellle Reymond (I am translating from the French):

"Swami Vivekananda gave the grandest expression of belief in super-conscious and patriotic humanity and in service in an epoch of profound national disintegration. He saw the future without fear. His whole life was no less than an effort to find the common basis of Hinduism. For, he believed in the organic unity of Indian thought and Indian aspirations and those aspirations comprised the realisation of the self, the consciousness of strength and the patriotic utilisation of that spirit in the direction, of sympathy and all-round service.'

It is a matter for legitimate pride and satisfaction that the Ramakrishna Order, inaugurated under such auspices and founded with such far-flung aims, has continuously and with zealous fervour implemented the objectives outlined above. The Mission has been fortunate in having had a notable line of saintly and enthusiastic men who have endeavoured to promote the ideals of the founder. From New York, Boston and Chicago to Los Angeles and San Francisco in the New world, in Paris and in London and all over India and many other countries, Ramakrishna Missions have sprung up from where the diffusion of Vedantic ideals takes place side by side with variegated social service. Whether they are needed and solicited for the distribution of food in famine areas or the alleviation of people suffering

from natural disasters like earthquakes or floods or epidemics, the members of the Mission are on the spot and their work is fruitful though unspectacular. The Mission is also running schools and colleges for boys and girls where the benefits of a residential system and of loving discipline and ethical and religious instruction are imparted. A great international centre of culture has now come into being in Calcutta which recently conducted a comprehensive religious and humanitarian Seminar attended by persons from all parts of the world. It may, thus, be asserted without qualification, that the vision of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the aspirations of Swami Vivekananda have taken shape. A new generation of dedicated individuals has come into existence whose aim is to translate into practical action the religious and universally humanitarian ideals which are the animating objectives alike of the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain creeds and philosophies.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON EDUCATION

We are all aware of the inadequacy of the present-day system of education. Educationists—Eastern and Western—are engaged for decades, in devising better methods of imparting knowledge and improving the morale of the student community. Despite their best efforts, we are, unfortunately, left in the same deplorable condition as we were before, and much worse, as is generally felt, there is a growing degeneration.

The reasons for the inadequacy and degeneration are quite obvious, but our savants of education are, for matters of policy and principle, not able to tackle the problems in their entirety.

It is universally recognised that we had, in ancient India, a unique system of education, which attracted students from all over the then known world. But unable to appreciate the wealth of Indian culture, the foreign educationists considered it useless and even unhealthy, and so tried to replace it by their own. But we would forget it to our detriment that the architects of the glorious culture of this great land were saints and seers. It is to them that we have to turn for light and guidance in the apparently difficult endeavour of re-orientating the system of education in India.

It is singularly fortunate that one such saint-seer of India, Swami Vivekananda, has bestowed his thoughts on this difficult problem and has offered practical solutions, which, if zealously applied, will facilitate establishing a system that will be a harmonious blending of the culture of this land with the scientific methods of the West.

Even in the midst of his cyclonic activities the Swami clearly saw the defects of modern education which is a bundle of negations. He observed:

“The education that you are getting now has some good points, but it has a tremendous disadvantage which is so great that the good things are all weighed down. In the first place it is not a man-making education, it is merely and entirely a negative education. A negative education, or any training that is based on negation, is worse than death.”

But his was not a destructive criticism. He fully visualised the healthy

system that is bound to replace the present one if India has to survive at all. So he said :

"We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas."²

This, in fact, is the *summum bonum* of education, an education which should aim at the development of the entire personality of man. The Swami has completely comprehended all the aspects of education, not neglecting its main purpose of imparting knowledge. So he has clarified :

"If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library."³

The object of the ideal system of education, then, should not merely be the advancement of theoretical knowledge but also the advancement of life, development of the highest powers and capacities, and the unfoldment of the noblest potentialities of the student. He must be enabled at the same time to apply intelligently to his own life all the ideas that he has learnt and gathered and thus promote his growth—physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually.

Swami Vivekananda has tackled the problem in its entirety. Unlike those who try to paint and decorate a hopelessly dilapidated building in their vain efforts to make it new, this grand architect has suggested that a glorious mansion should be built on a firmer foundation. That is why he observes :

"Every improvement in India requires first of all an upheaval in religion. Before flooding the land with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the land with spiritual ideas. If you attempt to get secular knowledge without religion, I tell you plainly vain is your attempt in India ; it will never have a hold on the people."⁴

The question arises as to why religion should be associated with education at all. The answer is obvious and more so in India.

The ordinary means of imparting education is to "drive into the mind" of the student a mass of information for which he may possess no real interest. The child is ordinarily considered more or less a receiving machine. But according to the literal meaning of the term education, he is to be

treated in an altogether different manner. He is to be regarded as a living entity with innate capacities and potentialities, which are to be drawn out.

"Whatever a man knows," observes Swami Vivekananda, "should, in strict psychological language, be what he discovers or unveils. What a man 'learns' is really what he discovers by taking the cover off his soul."⁵

In order to formulate any true system of education, we must first of all consider the nature of those whom we want to educate. Here a very important question arises: Are our children mere bodies—a mere combination of cells—, and their mind, an 'epi-phenomenon'—a by-product of the highly organised brain cells—, or, are they integrated body-minds? Or, are they spiritual entities, which move and dominate minds and bodies?

It is evident that a human being is not a mass of cells. He is a soul. We need not discuss here the superiority or otherwise of the different theories as to the true nature of human personality. But it is impossible to formulate any system of education without having a definite conception of the nature, the inner potentialities of the being we want to educate and train.

"Each soul," Swami Vivekananda declares, "is potentially divine, and the goal is to manifest this divine within."⁶ He defines religion as "the manifestation of the divinity already in man".⁷ This self-realisation is possible only through education which is "the manifestation of perfection already in man".⁸ The attainment of perfection brings out the divine nature. The goal of human existence is to manifest the perfection and divinity of the soul by removing the accretions and encrustations which have grown round what is taken to be the personality.

But, with reference to the education of the child, we are not concerned with this ultimate nature and goal. We are now interested mainly in the child as a human being, and in the course he is to follow for the evolution and growth of his personality. It is enough for our present purpose if we regard the student under our care as a self-conscious entity, dwelling in the physical body, having organs of sense-perception and possessing the 'inner-organ' called the mind, with its faculties of intellect, feeling and will. These faculties are capable of being developed to the maximum tune of perfection. Associated with the mind, the self-conscious entity or spirit becomes a psychological being. Connected with the physical body, the psychological

being becomes an embodied being—a human personality. Thus true education means an all-round culture—physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual. A complete system of education cannot disregard any of these different aspects. It must take into account the development of a healthy body, a proper control of sense-impulses and instincts, the acquirement of knowledge, sublimation and proper direction of feeling and sentiment, development of the will and the sense of duty. It must have the rightful place for soul-culture which removes mental darkness and revives the glory of the pure self by enabling one to rise above the false personality founded on identification with the unreal and nourished by false desires and morbid gratification of the senses. The physical body is to be sustained by proper material food, the mind to be developed through the assimilation of the right type of ideas, and the soul, to be nourished by earnest prayer and meditation.

A complete system of education, as has been stated, implies a balance and harmony between the properly developed body, mind and soul. Physical culture is comparatively simple and easy, while the culture of the mind is a more difficult affair as it has got its sub-conscious and conscious, its intuitive and intelligent processes with regard to the working of different faculties. The most difficult of all is the culture of the soul, which implies the awakening of the intuitive faculty or the soul's appreciation of itself and direct experience of the true Self, without passing through the complex, tortuous and insufficient mental process. But, whatever it be, it will not do for us to evade a question which stares us in the face. In our attempt at formulating the right type of education, we have to regard life as an indivisible whole, and as such we have to include in our system of education both intellectual knowledge and spiritual realisation.

When the Swami perceived that religion should be the firm foundation on which the great edifice of education was to be built, he had in mind no particular religion, but a universal religion. So he said:

"I look upon religion as the innermost core of education. Mind, I do not mean my own or anybody else's opinion about religion. The true eternal principles have to be held before people".⁹

In imparting religious education to the student, stress is to be laid on the

essentials of one's faith, viz., the nature of the soul, its relation to the Supreme Spirit and its attitude towards other souls. This is the basic common factor connecting all religions. It is to be distinguished from rituals and ceremonials which differ widely but help the student to realise the eternal relationship between his eternal soul and eternal God.

It is needless to say that only a pure and alert mind has the acumen to grasp instantaneously the instructions—secular and spiritual. The ancient Hindus with their incomparable knowledge of practical psychology laid proper stress on the pre-requisites of an ideal studenthood. They had, of course, spiritual realisation as the highest goal of life and made all secular knowledge subservient to it. But the path they prescribed for the attainment of knowledge holds equally good for receiving both the types, viz., secular and spiritual.

They held that the highest goal of life could be attained usually by passing through the various stages of life, one after another. Let us focus our attention on the first of them which is very pertinent with the issue with which we are dealing now. It is *Brahmacharya*, the period of sense-control including practice of continence, mental discipline and study. A *brahmachari*, if he wants to take the vow of life-long celibacy and finds himself fit for it, may remain as a *brahmachari* without entering the family life at all. Or, he may take to the life of a hermit or that of a monk. But normally the youth, after he finds himself properly equipped for the struggles of life with its manifold distractions and temptations, should enter the stage of the householder. According to the Hindu ideal, marriage is a sacrament and the household is an *ashrama*—a place not for sense-gratification but for the performance of duties, worship and service.

During the period of studentship, the foundation of life is to be laid properly. If it fails, later life is also bound to be a failure. That is the reason why great stress is laid on the life of *Brahmacharya*. It was so in ancient times and it should be so in the present time also.

Speaking of the application of the ancient ideal of the student life to our present-day education, Swami Vivekananda observes:

"The old institution of living with the *Guru* and such systems of imparting education are needed. What we want are Western science coupled with

Vedanta, *Brahmacharya* as the guiding motto, and *Sraddha* and also faith in oneself".¹⁰

The *Bhagavata* enumerates the duties of the *brahmachari* :—

"The student must practise self-control and study the scriptures, along with other branches of learning. He should observe strict continence, never consciously departing from it. He must learn to offer his heart's worship to the Divine Self in all beings and to see the One God residing in all."¹¹

Speaking of the power of continence Sri Ramakrishna declares :—

"If a man practises absolute *Brahmacharya* for twelve years, the *Medha Nadi* (nerve of intelligence) will open, i.e., his power of understanding will blossom. His understanding will become capable of penetrating and comprehending the subtlest ideas. With such an understanding man can realise God. God can be attained only through a purified understanding of this type."¹²

Chastity in thought, word and deed, always and in all conditions, constitutes what is called *Brahmacharya*. In it the energy that expresses itself as sexual energy, is transformed into spiritual energy. As Swami Vivekananda observes :—

"The human energy which is expressed as sex-energy, in sexual thought, when checked and controlled, easily becomes changed into *Ojas*. It is only the chaste man and woman who can make *Ojas*, and store it in the brain ; that is why chastity has always been considered the highest virtue. . .

"By the observance of strict *Brahmacharya* all learning can be mastered in a very short time ; one acquires unfailing memory of what one hears or knows but once. The chaste brain has tremendous energy and gigantic will-power."¹³

This view is fully supported by the considered opinion of some eminent Western medical men. Observes one of them :—

"It is a medical—a physiological—fact that the best blood in the body goes to form the elements of reproduction in both sexes. In a pure and orderly life, this matter is absorbed. It goes back into circulation, ready to form the finest brain, nerve and muscular tissue. This life of man, carried back and diffused through his system, makes him manly, strong, brave and heroic. If wasted it leaves him effeminate, weak and irresolute, intel-

lectually and physically debilitated, and a prey to sexual irritation, disordered function, morbid sensation, disordered muscular movement, a wretched nervous system, epilepsy, insanity and death. The suspended use of the generative organs is attended with a notable increase of bodily vigour and spiritual life."¹⁴

In the words of many members of the medical profession of New York and its vicinity,

"Chastity, a pure continent life, is consonant with the best conditions of physical, mental and moral health."

Dr. Alexis Carrell, in his work, *Man the Unknown*, observes:—

"It is well known that sexual excesses impede intellectual activity. In order to reach its full power, intelligence seems to require both the presence of well-developed sexual glands and the temporary repression of the sexual appetite. Freud has rightly emphasised the capital importance of sexual impulses in the activities of consciousness. However his observations refer chiefly to sick people. His conclusions should not be generalised to include normal individuals, especially those who are endowed with a strong nervous system and a mastery over themselves. While the weak, the nervous and the unbalanced become more abnormal when their sexual appetites are repressed, the strong are rendered still stronger by practising such a form of asceticism."¹⁵

To quote the words of two other authorities:—

"For a young man up to the time of his marriage, chastity is most salutary, not only in an ethical and aesthetical sense, but also from hygienic standpoint."

The goal of *Brahmacharya* is to dwell in *Brahman* or attain spiritual realisation. The means to attain it is an all-round sense-control and manifestation of the gathered energy along the line of spiritual striving and loving service, both of which lead the *Brahmachari* towards the highest illumination. In our modern world, Mahatma Gandhi advocated the practice of *Brahmacharya* for the good of the individual and the family and society. He represents the ancient spirit of *Brahmacharya* when he observes:—

"Mere control of animal passion has been thought to be tantamount to

observing *Brahmacharya*. I feel that this conception is incomplete and wrong. *Brahmacharya* means control of all the organs of sense. He who attempts to control only one organ, and allows all the others free play, is bound to find his effort futile. To hear suggestive stories with the ears, to see suggestive sights with the eyes, to taste stimulating food with the tongue, to touch exciting things with the hands, and then at the same time to expect to control the only remaining organ is like putting one's hands in the fire, and expecting to escape being burnt. . . If we practise simultaneous self-control in all directions, the attempt will be scientific and possible of success."¹⁶

With a deep insight gained through his own stirring and personal experience, he observes:—

"Mind is at the root of all sensuality . . . Many aspirants after *Brahmacharya* fail because in the use of their sense they want to carry on like those who are not *Brahmacharis*. Their effort is, therefore, identical with the effort to experience the bracing cold of winter in the scorching summer months.

"*Brahmacharya* means control of the senses in thought, word and deed . . . So long as thought is not under complete control of the will *Brahmacharya* in its fullness is absent. . . Curbing the mind is even more difficult than curbing the wind. Nevertheless the existence of God within makes even control of the mind possible."¹⁷

"Every boy", declares Swami Vivekananda, "should be trained to practise absolute *Brahmacharya* and then *Sraddha*, faith, will come."¹⁸

The word *Sraddha* means faith in oneself, faith in Divine existence and grace, faith in the scriptures revealed to the sages, faith in one's potentialities and capacity for self-realisation. In his inimitable way the Swami gives a new definition of the word *Sraddha*:

"The old religion said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself. But it is not selfish faith. It means faith in all, because you are all. Love for yourself means love for all, for you are all. It is the greatest faith which will make the world better."¹⁹

As already pointed out, the Swami's ideal of education is based on the

realisation that man, in his essential nature, is *Atma*—pure Spirit. The body of ours is a *Devalaya* . . . the abode of the Divine Being. Just as the soul animates the body, God dwells as the Soul of all souls. It is the *Brahma-Mandira*, the temple of *Brahman*, the Supreme Spirit.

The indomitable energy of the youth is to be manifested not only in his studies and in attempts at self-mastery, but also in loving service to his fellow-beings. The education of a young man is never complete without his developing this sense of service.²⁰

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, THE GREAT EDUCATOR

According to Swami Vivekananda, education is "the manifestation of perfection already in man", and religion is the innermost core of education. Education is not acquisition of undigested information but a comprehensive training one receives throughout one's life so as to have "life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas". The aim of education, particularly that of higher education is to make man competent to solve the problems of life. With this end in view, the Swami set forth an ideal method for imparting education.

Concentration and Detachment

The human mind has infinite power and potentiality. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on a particular subject-matter of study. The chemist in his laboratory concentrates all the energies of his mind on one point and fixes upon it his undivided attention. As a result, he finds the secret. The astronomer concentrates all his energies on the study of movements of heavenly bodies and projects his mind through the telescope on stars, the Sun, the Moon and other bodies so as to achieve his goal. Nature is ready to reveal her secret: we have to learn how to handle her. The cobbler will do his job better if his mind is more concentrated. Likewise, the cook will prepare a better meal if his mind is concentrated. It is necessary that while we learn how to concentrate our mind on a particular object, we should, at the same time, cultivate detachment. That is to say, we should be able to withdraw the mind from one object and place it on another. It is not unintelligent acquisition of facts but concentration of mind which is the most important thing in education.

Brahmacharya

Faith in the subject-matter of learning is an essential prerequisite of education. And faith emerges only when the student cultivates *Brahma-*

charya, which means chastity in thought, word and deed. If one observes strict *Brahmacharya* one can master one's object of study quickly and acquire unfailing memory of what one has already heard but once.

Sraddha

It is essential to teach a child the dignity of the human individual. Many students go astray because they have no faith in themselves. It is *Sraddha* or faith in one's dignity and power to do good that makes a man noble. He who looks upon himself as powerless, ignoble, sinful and imperfect is a miserable person indeed. He can do neither any good to himself nor any good to the world he lives in. We cannot afford to forget that we are children of Eternity, we are sparks of the Divine Fire. And this faith gives us infinite strength and indomitable energy. India's degeneration has been largely due to the lack of confidence and sense of dignity in her children.

Character

Character is strengthening of the will, and will has infinite power. The character of a man is but the sumtotal of his tendencies and dispositions. Every movement of my body, every idea that occurs in my mind and every deed that I do leaves an impression on my mind. And a man's character is determined by the sumtotal of these impressions. When the tendencies are more or less settled, they form habit. Great care is, therefore, necessary to ensure that a student does not form any bad habit. The only remedy for bad habits is counter-habits. All the bad habits that have formed a part of one's character can be controlled only by cultivating good habits. It is necessary to bear in mind that education does not consist in collection of information but in cultivation of good conduct. Let the student go on doing good deeds, thinking holy thoughts and keeping company of noble souls, he is sure to develop good habits. In moulding the character of a person, good and evil have their parts to play. In most cases, suffering has been a better teacher than happiness. The aim of a student

should not, therefore, be avoidance of evil and suffering but conquering evil and suffering through will force.

Communion with Nature

The right type of education can be imparted only when the student lives in communion with Nature. The *Mundaka Upanishad* speaks of two types of knowledge: one, the supreme, *para*, and the other, ordinary, phenomenal, relative, *apara*. All the temporal knowledge, sciences, literature and arts including the knowledge contained in the sacred Vedas was relegated by the Upanishads to the category of the ordinary or *apara* knowledge. That alone is *para* or supreme knowledge which helps destroy spiritual blindness and reveal the ever-present spiritual reality behind man and nature. The story of Satyakama is a case in point. Satyakama attained supreme knowledge when he lived in communion with Nature.

Gurukula System

The personal influence of the teacher in imparting education is very great indeed. And that is why the Swami advocates residential educational institutions where students and teachers can live together and have an exchange of ideas. The Swami said, "one should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is like a blazing fire, and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching. In our country the imparting of knowledge has always been through men of renunciation. The charge of imparting knowledge should again fall upon the shoulders of *tyagis*."¹ One of the reasons why in ancient India the standard of discipline among students was very high was that the teachers did not sell their knowledge; education was free. This fact coupled with the other that the student had to live under the direct supervision of his teacher largely contributed towards making education a comprehensive and fruitful preparation for life as a whole. It is true that the present conditions of India do not permit free education in all stages. Yet, the Swami urged that the teacher should never impart education with any ulterior, selfish motive, for money, name or fame. A teacher's work should be inspired by pure love for mankind

as a whole. The teacher should not, however, impart education indiscriminately. He should select his student with care and ascertain his fitness and competence for a particular branch of study. The Swami said, "the true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student's soul and see through and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can teach and none else. The conditions necessary for the taught are purity, a real thirst for knowledge and perseverance."

Psychological Approach

The oft-quoted saying of the Swami, "no one can teach anybody", is perfectly true, though it appears somewhat paradoxical. As the Swami said: "You cannot teach a child any more than you can grow a plant. All you can do is on the negative side—you can only help. You can take away the obstacles, but knowledge comes out of its own nature. Loosen the soil a little, so that it may come out easily. Put a hedge round it, see that it is not killed by anything, and there your work stops. You cannot do anything else. The rest is a manifestation from within its own nature."^{1a}

What the Swami called a "psychological approach" to education is virtually the heuristic method of the modern educators. In the heuristic method the pupil is looked upon as a discoverer and not as a passive listener of the lecture delivered by his teacher. It is the function of the teacher so to pose problems to be solved that they evoke a spirit of inquiry in the mind of the pupil and help him discover the truth without any bias whatsoever.

What the Swami aimed at was education for life as opposed to education for a profession. As the Swami said: "Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library. . . . If education were identical with infor-

mation, the libraries would be the greatest sages in the world and encyclopaedias the *rishis*.”²²

Education for life must necessarily be comprehensive in character. With this end in view the Swami laid great stress on physical culture. For the Swami, weakness is the only sin human nature falls victim to. The sin of weakness can be removed by strength,—physical, mental and spiritual. A sound mind necessarily presupposes a sound body. The necessity of physical exercise cannot be over-emphasised in the scheme of education. In course of his conversation with a disciple, the Swami said: “You must learn to make the physique very strong, and teach the same to others. Don’t you find me exercising every day with dumb-bells even now? . . . Body and mind must run parallel . . . When the necessity of strengthening the physique is brought home to people, they will exert themselves of their own accord. It is to make them feel this need that education is necessary at the present moment.” Again, he said, “the physically weak are unfit for the realisation of the self.” There are numerous passages where the Swami urged upon his countrymen to be strong physically before all else. “You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita.” Again, “What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and secrets of the universe and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean, meeting death face to face.”²³

One is reminded of Plato’s teaching that a sound educational system must give due place to gymnastic and music,—gymnastic for the body and music for the soul. *Vedanta* is, according to the Swami, a religion of strength and hope, not a religion of weakness and despair. The Swami urged upon his countrymen time and again that they had become weak and miserable because they did not apply the teachings of the *Vedanta* to the individual as well as collective life. Strength was the crying need of the hour in India according to the Swami and he repeatedly urged that what India needed was strength-giving religion and man-making education. The Upanishadic dictum, **Nayamatma balahinena labhyah*, this self cannot be

* नायमात्माबलहीनेन लभ्यः ।

realized by the weak, a man devoid of strength, may be taken as the theme on which the Swami harped incessantly.

It is incorrect to say that the Swami over-emphasised the spiritual basis of education to the utter neglect of the need of scientific and technological training. Rather he used to say most emphatically, "it is an insult to a starving people to offer them religion, it is an insult to a starving people to teach them metaphysics". He asked the Christians of America, who were at that time fond of sending out missionaries, as to why they did not try to save the bodies of the famished Indians from starvation. The recurring note in Vivekananda's plan for the regeneration of India is to remove poverty, unemployment and ignorance, and start educating the masses so that their lost individuality could be restored.

The Swami was convinced that for the regeneration of India it was necessary that she should take from the Western nations all that was good in their civilization. Four things in particular of Western civilization impressed him deeply and he called pointed attention of his countrymen to those four basic points. In the first place, he was impressed by the Western nations' great concern for the masses. The contrast between the condition of the masses in India and the condition of the masses in the West greatly pained the Swami. Secondly, he was impressed by the highly cultural life led by the women of America and the great esteem in which they were held by the American society. Thirdly, the power of organization of the West made a deep impression on the mind of the Swami. It is for this reason that he advised his countrymen to organize themselves so that rapid social progress could be ensured. Lastly, the material prosperity of the West made the Swami think as to what could be the source of the material progress of the West. He was convinced that the physical basis of the Western civilization was sufficiently strong and this explains why the West achieved amazing material progress. The Swami urged upon his own countrymen to be adequately sensible of the material values of life. He only insisted that all national activities of India should be centred round the spiritual ideal, since religion formed the core of the national life of India.

Speaking on the importance of technical education the Swami said, "if

I can get some unmarried graduates, I may try to send them over to Japan and make arrangements for their technical education there, so that when they come back, they may turn their knowledge to the best account of India." Again, he said, "what we need, you know, is to study, independent of foreign control, different branches of the knowledge that is our own, and with it the English language and Western Science ; we need technical education and all else which may develop industries, so that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for themselves, and save something against a rainy day."³

The study of technology should not, however, be one-sided. It is to be supplemented by the study of Humanities, particularly the Classics. In this connection, the study of Sanskrit occupies a very prominent place according to the Swami. In order to make our students fully acquainted with the spirit of Indian culture, the study of Sanskrit, which is the treasure-house of ancient wisdom, should be made obligatory. It is true that the Swami was in favour of teaching through the medium of the mother tongue of the student, yet he laid great stress on the study of Sanskrit. The gems of spirituality that are stored up in our sacred books and are in the possession of a few fortunate people should be broadcast and made known to everybody. These thoughts and ideas embodying the cultural heritage of India must be taught in the language of the people ; at the same time Sanskrit education must be imparted to all, "because the very sound of Sanskrit words gives a prestige and a power and a strength to the race."⁴

In the opinion of the Swami, the great Buddha took a false step when he discouraged the study of the Sanskrit language by the masses. He wanted immediate results and used Pali, the language of the day, as the medium of expression. So far so good. He spoke in the language of the people and the people understood him, thereby the Buddha spread his ideas quickly and made them reach far and wide. This, however, did not spread culture. The Swami said: "Knowledge came but the prestige was not there, culture was not there. It is culture that withstands shocks, not a simple mass of knowledge. You can put a mass of knowledge into the world, but that will not do it much good. There must come culture into the blood. . . Teach the masses in the vernaculars, give them

ideas ; they will get information, but something more is necessary, give them culture.”⁵

The Swami was perfectly certain that the only way of raising the condition of the masses in India was to educate them properly, to make them study Sanskrit. The Swami said : “The only way to bring about the levelling of caste, is to appropriate the culture, the education which is the strength of the higher castes. That done, you have what you want.”⁶ The study of Sanskrit does not only acquaint us with our rich heritage, it restores the faith and confidence in ourselves which is sadly missing today.

Any sound scheme of education must necessarily provide teaching of Fine Arts ; otherwise it will be incomplete. According to the Swami the source of greatness of a nation lies chiefly in its art. The case of Japan used to be frequently cited by the Swami as an example of a nation which became great on account of her art. “The very soul of Asia,” the Swami said, “is interwoven with art. The Asian never uses a thing unless there be art in it. Don’t you know that art is, with us, a part of religion? How greatly is a lady admired among us, who can nicely paint the floors and walls, on auspicious occasions, with the paste of rice powder? How great an artist was Shri Ramakrishna himself?”⁷ The Swami used to draw the attention of his audience to the artistic drinking vessels, the beautiful *Sari*, the mud walls and granaries of the Indians. According to the Swami, the ideal of the Westerners of his time was utility, whereas the ideal of India was art. In a mood of lamentation the Swami said : “With the Western education, those beautiful *ghatis* (drinking pots) of ours have been discarded and enamel glasses have usurped their place in our homes! Thus the ideal of utility has been imbibed by us to such an extent as to make it look little short of the ridiculous. Now what we need is the combination of art and utility. Japan has done that very quickly, and so she has advanced by giant strides.”⁸

A nation which does not respect the women cannot become great. One of the reasons of India’s degeneration was, according to the Swami, utter disrespect of men to “the living images of *Shakti*.” So long as the women of India live in tyrannical conditions and in servile dependence on others, India cannot hope to prosper. That was the prediction of the Swami. Manu

says, "where women are respected, there the gods delight ; and where they are not, there all works and efforts come to naught".⁹

The Swami was anxious to put into operation a scheme of education for women which would make them fearless and conscious of their chastity and dignity. If women of our country get the right type of education, they will be able to solve their own problems in their own way. The most sound scheme of education for women is one which teaches women to develop a strong character by the force of which they will be prepared to lay down their lives rather than flinch an inch from their chastity. Women are the living embodiment of the Divine Mother. "She when pleased becomes propitious, and the cause of the freedom of man" (*Chandī*). With a view to helping our women manifest their spiritual power and potentiality, the *Brahman* within them, the Swami wanted to establish a women's *math* which should have a girls' school attached to it. The curricula in the school should be as follows: Religious Scriptures, literature, Sanskrit, Grammar and rudiments of English. Other subjects such as sewing, culinary art, rules of domestic work, and upbringing of children should also be introduced. Worship and meditation shall form an indispensable part of the teaching. Men teachers are to be excluded from this kind of schools. Teaching work should be done by educated widows and *Brahmacharinis*. The elder *Brahmacharinis* will take charge of the training of the girl students in *Brahmacharya*. The guardians of the girls who would receive education in these schools are at liberty to marry their wards after the latter have received five or six years' training in the *math*. If any of the girls are considered fit for *Yoga* and religious life they will be allowed to stay in the *math*, taking the vow of celibacy, provided they are permitted by their guardians to do so. These celebrate nuns will, in course of time, be the teachers and preachers of the *math*. In towns as well as in villages these nuns will open centres of study and strive for the spread of the right type of female education. If the scheme can be put into operation effectively there is sure to be a reappearance of such ideal characters as Sita, Savitri and Gargi.

It is needless to say that the girl students will observe strict *Brahmacharya* so long as they remain in the *math* as pupils. Spirituality, self-

control and sacrifice should be the motto of the pupils of this *math*, and selfless service, the vow of their life.

The modern educators rightly emphasise that there should not be any curtailment in educational opportunities for women, but rather a great increase. Nevertheless, it is also admitted today that women's and men's education should not, in general, be identical in all respects. It is high time that our educators gave serious thought to the education of women as women. And for this purpose the scheme of female education propounded by the Swami would serve as an ideal one. Although men and women are equally competent for academic work and in many cases women have excelled in academic matters in comparison with men, yet women have a special aptitude for, and competence in, studies relating to home and family. The Swami had justly included such subjects as sewing, culinary art, domestic science and child-care in the curriculum of female education. It is gratifying to note that the University Education Commission of India (1948-49) has recommended such subjects as Home-economics and Home-management, Nursing and Fine Arts for women's education. It is well to remind the educators of today of what the Commission recommends in this connection: "A well-ordered home helps to make well-ordered men. Many a competent manager of business or of public affairs has become so in part because as a boy he lived in a home that was intelligently and efficiently managed by his mother. Order and efficiency thus became second nature to him. It is doubtful whether many men ever achieve orderly and efficient living whose early home environment was one of confusion and disorder. Probably there would be no quicker way to raise the general standard of economy and efficiency in Indian life than to make women interested and competent in the efficient, economical and convenient planning and management of their homes. A spirit of pioneering, of experiment and research in the planning and management of even a simple home, can add variety and zest to living, as well as economy and convenience, and can stimulate originality and resourcefulness in the children of the home."^{9a}

It has already been stated that according to the Swami religion is the innermost core of education. The Swami said: "Mind, I do not mean my

own or any one else's opinion about religion. Religion is as the rice, and everything else, like the curries. Taking only curries causes indigestion, and so is the case with taking rice alone."¹⁰

"What we want are Western science coupled with *Vedanta*, *Brahmacharya* as the guiding motto, and also *Sraddha* and faith in one's own self."¹¹ The Swami proposed to impart even secular knowledge through religion.^{11a} It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to have a clear idea of the Swami's conception of religion and how he proposed to introduce religious instruction in educational institutions. "Religion," said the Swami, "is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man".¹² Again, "Religion is the realization of spirit as spirit."¹³ "Religion lies in being and becoming in realisation . . . Do not disturb the faith of any . . . Confucius, Moses and Pythagoras ; Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Luther, Calvin and the Sikhs ; Theosophy, spiritualism and the like ; all these mean only the preaching of the Divine-in-man."¹⁴

It is necessary to bear in mind that the Swami did not confine his ideas to the usual expression "toleration" in relation to all religious views of the world. He went a step further and said that we have to "accept" all religions as true. This serves as the basis of a universal religion. Said the Swami: "We do not only tolerate but accept every religion, and with the Lord's help I am trying to preach it to the whole world. Three things are necessary to make every man great, every nation great: (1) conviction of the powers of goodness, (2) absence of jealousy and suspicion and (3) helping all who are trying to be and do good."¹⁵

That the Swami's conception of religion was not in any way a form of escapism will be evident from his numerous sayings. Two typical passages are worth quoting: "The children of the Lord are dying of starvation . . . Worship with water and *Tulsi* leaves alone, and let the allowance for his *Bhoga* (food offerings) be sent in offering food to the living God who dwells in the persons of the poor ; then will His grace descend on everything."¹⁶ The Swami's address at the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago, contains the following significant statements: ". . . The crying evil in the East is not religion—they have religion enough—but it is bread that the suffering millions of burning India cry out for with parched throats. They

ask us for bread but we give them stones . . . I came here to seek aid for my impoverished people."¹⁷

It is not through intellectual ratiocination but through direct experience that religious truths can be realized. Man has tremendous power of transcending the limits of the senses and those of reason. It is only when the aspirant reaches a region which is beyond senses, words and intellect that he can be sure of reaching the gateway of religion.

It is true indeed that religion 'bakes no bread', yet it is religion which gives man infinite strength, indomitable energy, absolute fearlessness and life eternal. Weakness is sin, according to the Swami, and this sin can be overcome through religion which fosters fearlessness. Fearlessness is the outcome of the conviction that man is not matter or mere physical body but deathless spirit.

It is in this context that the Swami's scheme of imparting religious education is to be assessed. A pertinent question may arise as to whether it is desirable to provide religious instruction in our educational institutions, in view of the fact that India claims to be a secular state. It is well worth considering the relevant articles of the Constitution of India in this connection. Article 25 affirms freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion. Article 26 affirms freedom of establishing religious institutions and managing religious affairs. Article 27 guarantees that public funds raised by taxes shall not be utilised for the benefit of any particular religion. Article 28 affirms freedom of attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in educational institutions established under any endowment or trust which requires that religious instruction shall be imparted in such institutions.

The Constitution of India steers a middle course in regard to the question of imparting religious instruction. While religious instruction is banned in State-owned educational institutions, it is permitted in other denominational institutions. Religious instruction is however to be distinguished from research in or study of comparative religion or philosophy of religion. This kind of research is permitted in state-owned institutions also. The reasons which impelled the makers of the Constitution to prohibit religious instruction in State-owned educational institutions are clear enough. We have in

our country followers of Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish and other faiths. Since Article 29 guarantees that no citizen of India shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race etc., the makers of the Constitution found it impossible to provide religious instruction for students professing diverse faiths and studying in the same educational institution.

There is no denying that in the past many atrocities were perpetrated and many corrupt practices sanctified in the name of religion. It is for this reason that some people look upon religion as a reactionary force which fosters a spirit of inaction and unworldliness. The abuse of religion lies at the root of our secular conception of the State.

It will be seen that Swami Vivekananda's conception of religion is not inconsistent with the principles of our Constitution. In the preamble to our Constitution we have solemnly resolved to secure to all citizens of India, among other things, fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation. It is religion, in the sense used by the Swami, that teaches what constitutes the dignity of the individual. So long as man is looked upon as a physico-chemical apparatus or a mind-body complex, the dignity of the individual cannot be ensured. The sense of dignity arises when man realizes himself as spirit and considers his fellow-beings as embodiments of the same spirit. It is perfectly certain that our educators will not think of banning religious education in State-owned schools and colleges when they will grasp the fundamentals of religion as shown by Swami Vivekananda.

*The Swami was never tired of saying that religion is realization ; not talk nor doctrine, neither rituals nor ceremonies, although idols or temples or churches or books are only the supports, the helps, of man's spiritual childhood.

The religion that the Swami wanted to teach was the religion of the *Vedanta* and the Upanishads—the religion which looks upon men as “children of immortal bliss.” *Vedanta* is a religion of strength and hope, not a religion of weakness and despair.

By insisting on the potential divinity of man the *Vedanta* assures hope of

infinite progress to every man, however lowly or fallen he may be. The *Vedanta* invests the human personality with a sacredness and dignity hitherto unknown.

The religion of the *Vedanta* cannot however be taught with the help of class-room lectures. What is to be banned is certainly a formal preaching of religious dogmas in schools and colleges, for, this will surely throttle the spirit of inquiry in the student and foster fanaticism and bigotry. What is absolutely needed, however, is teaching the fundamentals of religion through conduct and discipline, *sadhana*. And the right type of teacher can certainly inspire his students to receive spiritual illumination which is not to be confused with formal training in theology. It is to be remembered, therefore, that to be secular is not necessarily to be irreligious or irreverent. Our Constitution lays down that the State should not be identified with any particular religious faith, nor should it be partial to any one particular religion. This provides ample scope for religious pursuits of Indian citizens according to their temperament and capacity.

Swami Vivekananda's insistence on including Sanskrit, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the Upanishads and the *Vedanta* in the curriculum of study is not without significance. A nation cannot grow if it does not strike roots in its past tradition and culture. Yet, at the same time, it should not be a blind follower of the past. Its vision should stretch far and wide so that it can assimilate whatever is good and of lasting value in the civilization and culture of other nations.

The Swami said: "To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him, all the religions, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the Infinite."^{17a} Truth is one, the sages describe it in various ways—this is the central teaching of the Vedantic religion. This religion can well be taught in schools and colleges, for instead of fostering fanaticism and bigotry, the Vedantic religion promotes love, sympathy and understanding among men and emphasizes the spiritual oneness of the universe.

It is heartening to see that the recommendations of the University Education Commission of India (1948-49) on the subject of religious educa-

tion are in accord with the Swami's scheme. The Commission say, *inter alia* : "We must realise that false religions have brutalised men by their bloody rites and the shrivelling terrors of superstition . . . The truly religious man is the enemy of the established order, not its spokesman. He is the revolutionary who is opposed to every kind of stagnation and hardening. He is the advocate of the voice which society seeks to stifle, of the ideal to which the world is deaf . . . Diversity of opinion stimulates thought, enquiry and investigation."¹⁸ Again, "religion is not to be identified with a creed to be believed or an emotion to be felt or a ceremony to be performed. It is a changed life. If religion is a matter of realisation it cannot be reached through a mere knowledge of the dogmas. It is attained through discipline, training, *Sadhana*. It is a law of nature, that every one should digest his own food. So also every one must see with his own eyes. By the exercise of one's own will and reason one has to attain spiritual enlightenment?"¹⁹

It follows, therefore, that the disjunction we have to face today on account of the abuse of religion is not, religion or no religion, but, true religion or false religion. Religion cannot be removed from the curriculum of study for it is the very basis of Indian life and thought.

Moreover, secular education and spiritual education are not antagonistic to each other. While Radhakrishnan says that religion is the most secular of all pursuits, Vivekananda says that secular education is to be given through religion. Radhakrishnan lays stress on the fact that religion cannot be divorced from life ; all life must be infused with the life of spirit or be meaningless ; Vivekananda urges that religion helps a man in gaining confidence in his own self. Without self-confidence and awareness of the dignity of the human spirit no secular education can be fruitful.

The Swami urged that we should have the whole education of our country, spiritual and secular, in our hands, and we must make sure that education is imparted on national lines, through national methods, as far as practical.

According to the Swami, unity in diversity is the rule of nature and the rule of life. Since religion is dynamic in character, true religion must express unity in diversity. The Swami, therefore, wanted to build a temple of learn-

ing, a non-sectarian temple, having only 'OM' as the symbol, a great symbol which no religious sect can discard. The symbol refers to God the creator, the preserver and the destroyer. In this temple the pupils will be taught wherein lies the common bond of union among all religious faiths of the world, leaving aside the different rites and rituals, customs and traditions. At the same time, each sect shall have the liberty to come and teach its doctrines provided others' religious beliefs are not derided and injured. Secondly, the temple of learning should also provide teachers' training so that teachers can learn how to go about from door to door teaching religion and giving secular education to our people.

Throughout the ages there have been various methods of uplifting the masses. The Swami's plan for the uplift of the masses is the most constructive, practical and comprehensive. He touched the vital chord in this matter—education. As he said: "Education, Education, Education alone! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got. Through education, faith in one's own self, and through faith in one's self the inherent *Brahman* is waking up in them, while the *Brahman* in him is gradually becoming dormant."²⁰ Education, like many other values is in the crucible today. We talk of national integration, cultural fellowship, international understanding and similar other values. It is hardly necessary to reiterate that the Swami's views on education have a deeper significance today than when they were expressed. The purpose of education is certainly to liberate the mind of the pupil from the bondage of environment, to remove his cultural isolation and infuse a spirit of inquiry into his mind. But in doing all this, we should take care not to destroy the individuality of the pupil, for that ensures his spiritual essence. As the Swami used to say, within every man there is an idea; the external man is only the outward manifestation of this idea within. Likewise, every nation has a corresponding national idea. Our educational schemes should be so planned as not to interfere with the core of spirituality whose embodiment the individual is.

"In India", said the Swami, "courts and kings touched only a few; the

vast mass of the people, from the highest to the lowest, has been left to pursue its own inevitable course, the current of national life flowing at times slow and half-conscious, at others strong and awakened. I stand in awe before the unbroken procession of scores of shining centuries, with here and there a dim link in the chain, only to flare up with added brilliance in the next, and there she is walking with her own majestic steps,—my mother-land,—to fulfil her glorious destiny which no power on earth or in heaven can check—the regeneration of man the brute into man the God.” Let our educators harness all their energy and efforts so as to fulfil the cherished goal of the Swami. Until this goal is achieved, the import of the dictum, ‘education is the manifestation of perfection already in man’, will hardly be realized.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND MAN-MAKING EDUCATION

Swami Vivekananda was not merely a spiritual teacher but his vast intellect could scan all our national problems and throw on them the flood-light of his radiant mind which could resolve the darkness of ignorance underlying them. Swami Vivekananda in studying the problems of Indian national life could see the immense ignorance that the people of India were steeped in. And he could easily make out that the main reason of our degradation was lack of education. He says: "Education, education, education alone! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people there was brought to my mind the state of our own people and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got."¹ But Swami Vivekananda was conscious of the defects of the prevailing system of Education, as the following passages would show:—

(1) "It is almost wholly one of defects. Why, it is nothing but a perfect machine for turning out clerks."²

(2) "We have had a negative education all along from our boyhood. We have only learnt that we are nobodies. Seldom are we given to understand that great men were ever born in our country. Nothing positive has been taught to us. We do not even know how to use our hands and feet."³

(3) "Our pedagogues are making parrots of our boys and ruining their brains by cramming a lot of subjects into them** Goodness gracious! What a fuss and fury about graduating and after a few days all cooled down.**** It would be better if the people got a little technical education so that they might find work and earn their bread instead of dawdling about and crying for service."⁴

(4) "Is that education, as a result of which the will being continuously choked by force through generations is now well-nigh killed out; under whose sway, why mention new ideas, even the old ones are disappearing one by one—is that education which is slowly making man a machine?"⁵

(5) "Well, you consider a man as educated if only he can pass some examinations and deliver good lectures. The education which does not help

the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name?”⁶

If we go through the above passages carefully we shall be impressed by the fact that so long ago as the last decade of the nineteenth century when people were enamoured of the prevalent system of education, Swamiji could clearly envisage its underlying defects. Though Swamiji was never mainly concerned with pedagogy as such, yet education as a national problem always arrested his thought. And his observations on education were always revealing, so much so that Sister Nivedita in one place remarks: “With regard to the details of his educational suggestions, their pedagogic soundness had always been startling to me.”⁷ But one will not be very much startled if one remembers the fact that Swamiji, at the end of his spiritual quest, had found the key to life. This had made him a *guru*, a spiritual teacher of the whole humanity. No door of human life remained closed or barred to him. He was the *Yugacharya*, the teacher of the new era. So he could not only find out the defects of the educational system in vogue but could also clearly and unmistakably enunciate and formulate a new system—a system which will not only solve the educational problems of India alone but of the whole world.

The Aim of Education

It is unnecessary for our present purpose to discuss the philosophical and psychological concepts of Swamiji on which his educational ideals were based. According to him education is the training of the mind with a definite objective: the development of the total personality of a man. Swamiji says: “The ideal of all education, all training should be man-making. Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library.”⁸ In another place he says: “The end of all education, all training, should be

man-making. The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow.”⁹ And yet in another place: “It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want.”¹⁰

The Method

Having thus determined the aim of education let us examine the method which Swamiji prescribes for realising this ideal. It is a well-known fact that the philosophical basis of Swamiji’s view of life is *Advaita*—the unity of all existence. To realise this unity is the aim and end of all our quest. So, if this philosophy is correct, then there is no question of acquiring anything extraneous. Swamiji says: “Knowledge is inherent in man, no knowledge comes from outside ; it is all inside. What we say a man ‘knows’ should, in strict psychological language, be what he ‘discovers’ or ‘unveils’ ; what a man ‘learns’ is really what he ‘discovers’, by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge.”¹¹ And the natural deduction from this is: “You see no one can teach anybody. The teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teaching. *Vedanta* says that within man is all knowledge—even in a boy it is so—and it requires only an awakening, and that much is the work of a teacher. You cannot teach a child any more than you can grow a plant. All you can do is on the negative side—you can only help. You can take away the obstacles, but knowledge comes out of its own nature. Loosen the soil a little, so that it may come out easily. Put a hedge round it ; see that it is not killed by anything, and there your work stops. You cannot do anything else. The rest is a manifestation from within its own nature. So, with the education of a child ; a child educates itself.”¹² That is why Swami Vivekananda succinctly defines education as “the manifestation of the perfection already in man.”¹³ So, according to Swamiji, “liberty is the first condition of growth.”¹⁴ A child should be allowed to develop in its own particular way. The only help that can be given is to help it to perfect the instrument with which it will gather knowledge.

A man is a body-mind complex. Hence the body cannot and should not

be neglected. Physical weakness is a great hindrance in our life. Swamiji says: "We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them ; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything ; we must strengthen it. First of all our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong my young friends ; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. These are bold words ; but I have to say them, for I love you. I know where the shoe pinches, I have gained a little experience. You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger."¹⁵

In another place he says: "What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face."¹⁶

Thus perfecting the body by acquiring 'muscles of iron and nerves of steel' we should try to perfect the other instrument necessary for acquiring knowledge, viz. the mind. And the only method for perfecting this instrument is concentration. Swamiji says: "There is only one method by which to attain this knowledge, that which is called concentration. The chemist in his laboratory concentrates all the energies of his mind into one focus, and throws them upon the materials he is analysing, and so he finds out their secrets. The astronomer concentrates all the energies of his mind and projects them through his telescope upon the skies ; and the stars, the Sun, the Moon give up their secrets to him. The more I can concentrate my thoughts on the matter on which I am talking to you, the more you concentrate your thoughts, the more clearly you will grasp what I have to say.

"How has all the knowledge in the world been gained but by the concentration of the powers of the mind? The world is ready to give up its secrets if we only know how to knock, how to give it the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow come through concentration. There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more

concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point ; that is the secret."¹⁷

But along with this power of concentration another thing is equally important—the power of detachment. Swami Vivekananda says: "So along with the development of concentration we must develop the power of detachment. We must learn not only to attach the mind to one thing exclusively but also to detach it at a moment's notice and place it upon something else. These two should be developed together to make it safe."¹⁸

Now, how to achieve concentration? Mind can be controlled and concentration attained by following the methods of *Raja Yoga*. The *Raja Yoga* prescribes several methods the most important of which are breathing and meditation. Swamiji says: "By the exercise of breathing we begin to feel all the movements of the body that we (now) do not feel. As soon as we begin to feel them, we begin to master them. Thoughts in germ will open to us and we will be able to get hold of them."¹⁹ About meditation Swamiji remarks as follows: "Before we control the mind we must study it. We have to seize this unstable mind and drag it from its wanderings and fix it on one idea. Over and over again this must be done. By power of will we must get hold of the mind and make it stop and reflect upon the glory of God."²⁰

So, this in brief is the process by which mind can be developed into a fit instrument for gaining knowledge. But as a pre-requisite another thing is necessary, that is *Brahmacharya*. As Swamiji says in his various lectures: "Every boy should be trained to practise absolute *Brahmacharya* and then and then alone, faith and Shraddha will come. Chastity in thought, word and deed always and in all conditions is what is called *Brahmacharya*. It is owing to want of continence that everything is on the brink of ruin in our country. By observance of *Brahmacharya* all learning can be mastered in a very short time ; one acquires an unfailing memory of what one hears or knows but once. The chaste brain has tremendous energy and gigantic will-power-controlled desire leads to the highest results. Transform the sexual energy into the spiritual energy. The stronger the force is, the more can be done with it . . . Only a powerful current of water can do hydraulic mining."²¹

But in order to receive this training one should live in constant touch with competent teachers. Ordinary schools where mercenary teachers give merely academic education to students is no education at all. So Swamiji says: "My idea of education is *gurugriha-vasa*. Without the personal life of the teacher there would be no education. One should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is like a blazing fire, and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching. In our country the imparting of knowledge has always been through men of renunciation. The charge of imparting knowledge should again fall upon the shoulders of *tyagis*." Again he says: "The disciples of old used to repair to the hermitage of the guru, fuel in hand, and the guru, after ascertaining his competence would teach him the Vedas. Without faith, humility, submission and veneration in our hearts towards the teacher, there cannot be any growth in us. In those countries which have neglected to keep up this kind of relation, the teacher has become a mere lecturer, the teacher expecting his five dollars and the person taught expecting his brain to be filled with the teacher's words and each going his own way after this much is done."²³ A life can be lighted by the fire of another life. So, unless the teacher is a man of character and the student is receptive there can be no education in the real sense of the term. Man-making education which Swamiji wanted, can be imparted only when a student lives with an ideal teacher and profits by his advice and example.

Swamiji also wanted that the school should have proper environmental set-up. That is why he says "that true education is gained by constant living in communion with nature."²⁴

The above are in brief outline the theories of objectives and methods of education as adumbrated by Swami Vivekananda. They are revolutionary in character, and at the same time they are rooted in the age-old tradition of India. Education in modern times in India has been wrongly planned and carelessly executed. It is high time that we discard these systems and try to develop our system on national lines as indicated by Swamiji. If we can revise our plan and programme, then and then alone we shall be able to evolve a system which will be truly "man-making and character-building". And this is necessary not only for the regeneration of India but for the

redemption of the whole world. As Swamiji says: "But education has yet to be in the world, and civilisation—civilisation has begun nowhere yet."²⁵

The ideal, therefore, is that "we must have the whole education of our country, spiritual and secular, in our own hands, and it must be on national lines, through national methods as far as practicable."²⁶

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA—A PATRIOT SAINT, NATION-BUILDER, AND AWAKENER OF INDIA

Swami Vivekananda fostered the nascent Indian nationalism both by his life and precept. His great triumph in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago indirectly helped the cause of Indian nationalism by raising the Indians from the slough of despair and despondency into which they had fallen, and awakened them to a sense of pride in their own greatness which lies at the root of Indian nationalism. The people of Ramnad echoed the voice of India when they said in their Address of Welcome:¹ "Your labours in the West have indirectly and to a great extent tended to awaken the apathetic sons and daughters of India to a sense of the greatness and glory of their ancestral faith". The people of Kumbhakonam were equally emphatic. "The success of your work", said they,² "has made us feel that we, too, as a people have reason to be proud of the achievements of our past . . . the future of the Hindu nation cannot but be bright and hopeful". Others,—historians, poets, essayists, politicians—had sung the glories of Hinduism before Swamiji—but no one had made such a deep impression upon the people of India—because not by words alone but by actual deeds he placed Hinduism on a high pedestal, and the Hindus from Colombo to Almora demonstrated, through their Addresses, how they realized that their ancient universal religion of brotherhood bound them together by a sense of priceless common heritage of the past which was destined to make the Indian nation great and esteemed in the eyes of the world.

The value of such stimulating factors in the growth of Indian nationalism cannot be over-estimated. But the great Swami did not appeal to emotion alone. He taught the Indians the essential bases of nationalism—bases on which alone it could stand firm like a rock.

In the foreground of his programme he put the ideals of manhood. In course of his reply to a parting Address given him by the junior *Sannyasins* of the Belur Math, on the eve of his leaving for the West for the second time (19th June, 1899), Swami Vivekananda said:³ "Remember that the aim of this Institution is to make man. You must not merely learn what

the *Rishis* taught. Those *Rishis* are gone, and their opinions are also gone with them. You must be *Rishis* yourselves. You are also men as much as the greatest men that were ever born, even our Incarnations. What can the *mantras* and *tantras* do? You must stand on your own feet. You must have this new method—the method of man-making. The true MAN is he who is strong as strength itself and yet possesses a woman's heart. You must feel for the millions of beings around you, and yet you must be strong and inflexible, and you must also possess obedience; though it may seem a little paradoxical—you must possess these apparently conflicting virtues . . .” This trenchant appeal to his colleagues shows how he felt the onrush of the coming tide, the ideals that would verily suit the spirit of the age. As a seer he realized that the days of philosophic approach of the ancients, their quest for ultimate reality, the mysticism of the medieval period, the thirst for personal salvation (*Mukti*) and the exuberance of emotional devotionism were ending, and so he prescribed “a new method—the method of man-making”, with Humanity as its God and social service its goal or religion. He intuitively felt that the people were getting more critical and wanted reason to prevail over age-old customs and rituals; the dynamic moral force of English education, the arguments of the Brahmo Samaj with its ceaseless endeavour to purify the caste-ridden environs of the existing society, the teachings of literary masterminds like Vidyasagar, Bankim, Bhudev and others—imbued with the philosophy of Compté and Kant, were paving the way for the growth and development of the modern mind. Swamiji felt to the very fibres of his intellectual perception that the modern mind was to be approached by modern methods, which must be easy, practical and even pragmatic. Yet he was not all for effacement of conditions that morally held fast society for ages and were not detrimental to its ethical, temperamental and progressive well-being.

The next great factor in the building up of nationalism, according to Swamiji, was that it must be broadbased—both in ideal and scope. It must transcend politics of the type that was then in vogue, and embrace the teeming millions of India. Swami Vivekananda maintained a rigid and scrupulous silence on political questions. If anybody ever asked him any-

thing about it, he simply said, "Well, what do I know? I am not a politician, but only a teacher of religion". If in foreign countries anybody asked him anything about the political grievances of the Indians, he carefully avoided the topic and passed it by. It was revolting to his dignity as an Indian to speak of the political grievances of his fellow-countrymen before the foreigners of the free countries of the world. Once when somebody asked him what he thought of the Indian National Congress, he answered dreamily something like this, "Well, I think it is not altogether bad. Whatever makes for the unification of the races of India must be good".⁴

Again and again he would stress on the necessity for liberty, equality, and the raising of the masses urging that 'liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth and well-being. Where it does not exist, the man, the races, the nation must go. The only hope of India is from the masses. The upper classes are physically and morally dead.' He wanted to combine Western progress with India's spiritual background.

"Make a European society with India's religion. Become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religion, culture and instincts."

With prophetic insight he knew very well that Godless movements in India can never succeed, so in his great aim of nation-building in India he prayed for strength from the Almighty. His memorable call for national consciousness is engraved in the hearts of his countrymen—"Oh India, forget not that your ideal woman is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti; forget not that your ideal god is the great ascetic of ascetics, Umanath Sankar; forget not that your marriage, your wealth, your life are not for your sense-enjoyment—are not for your individual personal pleasure; forget not that from your very birth you are sacrificed for the Mother. Hero, take courage, be proud that you are an Indian, say in pride. 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother', say 'the ignorant Indian, the poor Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the pariah Indian, is my brother'; be clad in torn rags and say in pride, at the top of your voice, 'The Indians are my brothers—the Indians are my life, India's God and Goddess are My God, India's Society is the cradle of my childhood, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred seclusion of my old age'; say 'India's soil is my highest heaven,

India's good is my good', and pray day and night, 'Thou Lord, Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me—Thou Mother of strength, take away my unmanliness and make me a Man'.

Swamiji told his people, particularly the young men in whom he had great faith, that in order to become great as a nation they must cultivate strength—strength of the mind as well as of the body. The texts of the Upanishads most dear to his heart, and which he was never tired of repeating, are *Nayamatma balahinena labhyah** and *Uttisthata jagrata prapya baran nivodhata.†*

Thus it will be seen that though Vivekananda drank from the streams of English literature he stuck to his country's spiritual moorings and sought to uplift his countrymen by application of modern methods and appealing to their reason. He realised that a renaissance was coming and India should be equipped to welcome it. All was not rosy when he started on his mission. The doubts and unbelief of the ignorant, the indifference of the educated, the apathy of newspapers, the mean jealousy of some sectarian leaders in India and in America, and the ridicule of the unthinking rabble were thorns on his way. By personal magnetism, sweet reasonableness and disarming logic he won over his opponents so far as to obtain a peaceful hearing. His gentle persuasiveness led his audience into sympathetic understanding. With this change of attitude—a wonderful change indeed in those days—he laid emphasis on reason and patriotic instincts and by impassioned eloquence carried the youth of the day with him. He rested more on facts, reason, faith and work—never depending on emotion alone which he said belonged to animals—"they are creatures of emotion entirely". In reply to an Address at Madras, Swamiji thundered—"I have told you what we have become. Where are the men to lift us from this despondent and unhappy situation? Young men of Madras, my hope is in you. Do you respond to the call of your nation? Each one of you has a glorious future if you dare believe me. Have the tremendous faith in yourselves which I had when I was a child and I am working it out. Have that faith, each one, in yourself that eternal power is lodged in everyone of our souls. You will revive the

* नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः ।

† उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निवोदत ।

whole of India. Aye! we will go to every country under the sun and our ideas must be within the next ten years a component of the many forces that are working to make up every nation in the world. We must enter into the life of every race inside India and outside India; we will work. That is how it should be. I want young men. Say the Vedas, 'It is the strong, healthy, of sharp intellect and young that will reach the Lord.' This is the time to decide your future—with this energy of youth, when you have not been worked out, not become faded but are still in the freshness and vigour of youth. Work—this is the time for the freshest, the most untouched and unsmelled fresh flowers, alone to be laid at the feet of the Lord. Get up, therefore, greater works are to be done than picking quarrels and becoming lawyers and other things. Far greater is this sacrifice of yourselves for the benefit of your race, for the welfare of humanity, for life is short. What is in this life? . . . Life is short but the soul is eternal and therefore one thing being certain, death, let us take up a great ideal, and give up the whole life to it. Let this be our determination and may He, the Lord, who comes again and again for the salvation of His people, may He bless us and lead us all to the fulfilment of our aims."

Swamiji proclaimed:—"If there is a sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness, weakness is sin, weakness is death. That had been the great lesson of the Upanishads. Fear breeds evil and weeping and wailing. There had been enough of that, enough of softness. What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and secrets of the Universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face."

He asked us to "condemn occultism and mysticism . . . these creepy things: there may be great truth in them, but they have nearly destroyed us . . . And here is the test of truth—anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and spiritually, reject as poison, there is no life in it, it cannot be true. Truth is strengthening. Truth is purity, truth is all-knowledge . . . These mysticisms, in spite of some grains of truth in them, are generally weakening . . . Go back to your Upanishad, the

shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy, and part from all these mysterious things, all these weakening things. Take up this philosophy, the greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence." "And beware of superstition. I would rather see everyone of you rank atheists than superstitious fools, for the atheist is alive, and you can make something of him. But if superstition enters, the brain is gone, the brain is softening, degradation has seized upon the life . . . Mystery-mongering and superstition are always signs of weakness".

Some of these extracts with a few others that follow have been taken from his *Lectures from Colombo to Almora* (1933) and *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (1942) both published by the Adwaita Ashram, Mayavati (Almora). Here we find the Patriot-Saint's key to the Awakening of India. Wherever he spoke he spoke with utmost sincerity as an Indian to India's masses. He became one of them, he entered into their skin as it were, he felt and wept with them and filled them with hope and ambition. He was a powerful orator in Bengali and English and master of a vigorous style as a writer of prose and poetry in both these languages. As a composer of songs—and himself a magnificent singer—he got the blessings of his Master Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the plaudits of the learned.

He was completely above parochial patriotism and thus commanded universal respect and admiration. His eloquence worked miracles and his fine manly figure with abiding charm of expression and poise lent ineffable dignity to his utterances. He became a name to conjure with and his exposition of the Upanishadic doctrine of liberty, equality and divinity in a simple and illustrative manner held the audience in rapture. All this was necessary to uplift a dying nation. Soon young India felt the pulsation of an awakened consciousness and more than half the battle was won.

Another fundamental basis of nationalism in the eyes of Swamiji was the cultivation of a knowledge of the outside world on the part of the Indians—a true grasp of the onward march of humanity. India must develop an international outlook. He said: "Even in politics and Sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no longer be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of

international grounds, international organisation, international combination ; international laws are the cry of the day. That shows solidarity. In science, every day they are coming to a similar broad view of the matter. . . . And again, there cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming everyday clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial or national or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity ; nay the whole of life, within its scope”.

Swamiji said: “I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and wherever such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy or holiness—the result has been disastrous to the secluding one. The fact of our isolation from all the other nations of the world is the cause of our degeneration, and its only remedy is getting back into the current of the rest of the world. Motion is the sign of life”.

He once wrote, “I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread. The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried—if for nothing else, for the novelty of the thing”.

In his letter from Japan in 1893 his clarion call to his countrymen is historic. “The Japanese are one of the cleanest people on earth. Everything is so neat and tidy . . . The Japanese seem now to have fully awakened themselves to the necessity of the present time. The modern rage for progress has penetrated even the priesthood. I can’t write what I have in my mind about the Japanese. Only I want that numbers of our young men must pay a visit to Japan and China every year, especially the Japanese to whom India is still the dream-land of everything bright and good. And you, what are you? Boobies talking twaddle all your lives, vain talkers, what are you? Come, see these people and go and hide your faces in very shame.”⁵

“Come, be men. Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad. See how nations are on their march. Do you love men? Do you love your country? Then come, let us struggle for higher and better things. Look

not back—no, not even if you see your dearest and nearest cry—look not back, but forward march”.

“India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand of her young men—men and not brutes. The English Government has been the instrument brought over here by the Lord to break your crystallised civilization, and Madras supplied the first men who helped in giving the English a footing—how many men, unselfish and thorough-going men is Madras ready now to supply, to struggle unto life and death to bring about a new state of things—sympathy for the poor—and bread to their hungry mouths—enlightenment to the people at large and struggle unto death to make men of them who have been brought to the level of beasts by the tyranny of your forefathers?”

Swamiji travelled through various cities in America, in England and in India, delivering addresses and sometimes courses of lectures, replying to questions and inquiries after truth. He often held classes to dispel illusions and wrong attitudes regarding his countrymen. He tried hard to impress upon his countrymen the Upanishadic divinity of man, the superior need for strength, unity, courage and nobility of character which only could make a nation. He pleaded earnestly for love and banishment of hatred.

Thus in his process of nation-building, Vivekananda drew upon the elixir of life from home and abroad. He was conscious about the growth of modern science (he died in 1902) and seriously welcomed its devastating effects on our age-old beliefs and customs holding it as a manifestation of the real religious spirit as it sought to understand truth by sincere efforts. Professor Albert Einstein says: “In this materialistic age of ours the serious scientific workers are the only profoundly religious people”. Vivekananda realised that the greatness of modern civilization is that it possesses a large stock of demonstrated truths and therefore infinitely more of practical power. He says, “experience is the only source of knowledge”, and urges that the same methods of investigation which we apply to sciences and to exterior knowledge should be applied to religion. “If a religion is destroyed by such investigation it was nothing but a useless and unworthy superstition; the sooner it disappeared the better”. “Why religions should claim that they are not bound to abide by the standpoint of reason—no one

knows". It is interesting to recall that years ago Prof. Seeley said "India is all past and I may almost say has no future".⁶

Vivekananda had a prophetic vision that it was not religion that was the cause of India's downfall ; but on the contrary, the true religion—the very life and breath of her individuality—was nowhere to be found ; customs, practices and age-old rituals must be replaced and that a reshuffling and a re-statement of the forgotten spiritual culture of the ancient sages were urgently required for uplifting his country's down-trodden, poverty-stricken masses. He had already realised that an empty stomach was not good for religion, that only by disseminating education—industrial and general—among the masses this nation might get back its lost individuality and its hope for the future.

He changed the thought-current of his country and his Bengali masterpieces *Bhabbar Katha* (Points to be Considered), and *Prachya o Paschatya* (East and West) rank among the highest pieces of literature, in elegance, diction and style. Young Bengal was surcharged with electricity and patriotism by his soulful appeals and marshalling of facts compelling attention towards discovery of means to root out corroding elements from our national organism.

Thus we find him lecturing in America (a few days before he spoke at the Parliament of Religions on Sept. 11, 1893) strongly dwelling upon the poverty of the majority of the masses and urging that the Christian missionaries in India had fine theories and started with good ideas, but had done nothing for the industrial development of the people. He said that Americans, instead of sending out missionaries to train them in religion, would better send some one out to give them industrial education. He explained his mission in his country to be to organize monks for industrial purposes, that they might give the people the benefit of this industrial education and thus elevate them and improve their condition.⁷

In conclusion it must be emphasized that the nationalism of Swami Vivekananda was based on his intense patriotism. The short sketch of his life at the beginning of this Volume contains many passages which give us a glimpse of his ardent love for his motherland. The luxuries of American life placed at his disposal by friends and devotees tormented him with the

thoughts of the miseries and sufferings of his countrymen ; the thoughts of removing the wretched poverty of Indian masses haunted him day and night and even spiritual salvation was of less urgency to this saint among saints—the spiritual son of Ramakrishna—than the promotion of the material condition of his fellow-countrymen. All this led him to enunciate the doctrine that the service to the low and the down-trodden was the real service to God, which found eloquent expression in one word—*daridra-narayan*. It conveys an idea of the highest type of patriotism to which it is difficult to find a parallel in the history of the world. His clarion call to the youths of his country to shed fear, gather strength, endure sufferings and sacrifice everything, even life, for the sake of the motherland and the service of her poor grovelling masses, placed his nationalism on a lofty and secure foundation—for these sincere appeals came straight from the innermost core of the heart of a unique personality who placed the welfare of India above everything else in the world.

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5. *Swami Vivekananda*, Nateson, 3rd Edn., p. 593.
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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA—THE GREAT INDIAN HUMANIST, DEMOCRAT AND PATRIOT

In the autumn of 1956 I happened to be on Cape Comorin, the southernmost edge of India. On a rocky coast, at a spot where the waves of three seas meet, we were fortunate to behold a splendid unforgettable spectacle, the birth of a new day. The first rays of the sun rising from the ocean gilded the cupola-shaped Kanya Kumari temple, the columns of the three-seas temple; they were reflected in the dazzling white walls of the recently erected temple in honour of Mahatma Gandhi. Far out on the sea, like a flock of quaint birds, the sails of light fishing boats dived in and out of the waves, while south of the rocky cape, some 200 metres from the shore rose a lonely cliff, against which the waves noisily beat. "The cliff of Swami Vivekananda," I was told by a young man standing nearby who evidently understood that I was admiring the majestic beauty of the granite islet. On hearing the name of Vivekananda, about whom I first learned while a student from the works of Romain Rolland, I came up to the young man. "Yes, it was on this cliff that Swami Vivekananda had spent three days before leaving India and setting out for distant lands," he said. "How I would like to visit that islet," I remarked. "Wait a while," the young man said, "I will go to the fishing village and get a boat."

But my desire to step onto Vivekananda's cliff was so great that without waiting for the young man's return I decided to swim to the islet. I was about half way across from the shore to the islet when I noticed a fishing boat in which the young man stood up. He was shouting something and waving his arms. But the wind carried off his words and I could not get the meaning of the signs. We almost simultaneously reached the islet and climbed up along the ledge to the top. "It is dangerous to swim here," my volunteer guide remarked. "There are big sharks. But all's well that ends well."

"People say," he added, "that Swami Vivekananda swam to the islet: he was a fine athlete." There was an even platform on the top of the cliff, on which a circle was drawn. My new friend placed a few bananas within

it and, sitting down on a rock, said: "Sit down and think of the one who indicated to us the road to a new life." I followed his advice. Only the anxious cries of sea gulls and the rumble of the surf broke the silence . . .

Everything I had read about Vivekananda came to my mind. I recalled the words of Tagore that he who wants to understand India must read Vivekananda, that he awakens in the younger generation love for, and devotion to, their motherland, their pride in its past and hope for its bright future. This indeed is so. Reading and re-reading the works of Vivekananda each time I find in them something new that helps deeper to understand India, its philosophy, the way of the life and customs of the people in the past and the present, their dreams of the future.

Perhaps it was there, on the lonely cliff located, as it were, at the foot of India, thinking and praying for the happiness of his people, that Vivekananda repeated his words, filled with unshakable faith in the future of his much suffering motherland, words which today ring out like a prophecy. Vivekananda said that the sun of courage had risen, that his country would inevitably wake up and nothing could prevent that process. India would be in the grip of slumber no more.

I thought of his life, brief but dazzlingly bright, full of indefatigable activity and an impassioned desire to make his compatriots aware of their greatness and lead them onto the road of a new life.

. . . Six years have passed since that unforgettable visit to the Swami Vivekananda cliff. That time has not been wasted. I have come to know Vivekananda more intimately, I have read many of his works, the studies of Indian scientists dedicated to various aspects of his teaching. I have also met some leaders of the Ramakrishna Mission, particularly Swami Ranganathananda, with whom I have had many interesting and useful conversations both in Delhi and Moscow about the teaching and activities of Vivekananda.

In this article I want to discuss in brief some aspects of world outlook and activities of Vivekananda which, it seems to me, are most in line with the interests of his motherland and arouse in Soviet people deep sympathy and respect.

I think that Vivekananda's greatest service is the development in his

teaching of the lofty ideals of humanism which incorporate the finest features of Indian culture.

Since ancient times lofty life-asserting humanistic ideas have formed the foundation of India's world outlook. These ideas have been expressed in a religious philosophical form which as they developed paved their way in constant struggle against the scholastic, ascetic and passive contemplation of the world. It is these ideas that infuse many of the works of Vedic literature, the ancient Indian epics, the greatest writing of Kalidasa and the democratic poetry of the *bhakti*.

Vivekananda assimilated and modified the religious philosophical ideas of the *Vedanta*, adapting them to the conditions of the new life. The voice of Vivekananda at the end of the last century resounded loudly in the enslaved, brutally exploited country where all human rights were trampled under foot, in a country torn asunder by caste, religious and racial prejudices assiduously fomented by the colonialists. Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out that Vivekananda's voice was filled with calm and dignity, confidence in himself and his mission and at the same time was infused with dynamic and fiery energy and a fervent desire to make India go forward. "He made Indian philosophy concern itself with the problems of the common man," writes Swami Ranganathananda. "He brings down the *Vedanta* to fertilise the fields of common life."¹

• It is hard to understand the distinctions in the development of the humanistic basis of contemporary Indian culture without taking into account the influence exerted on it by the religious philosophical ideology widespread in India, in particular without a correct analysis of the ideas and views of Vivekananda and also some other religious social reformers and enlighteners, such as Rammohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, Said Ahmad Khan and Aurobindo Ghosh.

In my studies of contemporary Indian literature I have more than once had the opportunity to see what great influence the humanistic ideals of Vivekananda have exercised on the works of many writers. It is difficult in a brief article to examine in detail this interesting yet little-studied problem. But as an illustration one could cite the poetry of Suryakanta Tripathi Nirala, outstanding poet and prose writer in Hindi who died

recently, in which the influence of Vivekananda's views can clearly be traced.

In my opinion, Vivekananda's humanism has nothing in common with the Christian ideology which dooms man to passivity and to begging God for favours. He tried to place religious ideology at the service of the country's national interests, the emancipation of his enslaved compatriots. Vivekananda wrote that the colonialists were building one church after another in India, while the Eastern countries needed bread and not religion. He would sooner see all men turn into confirmed atheists than into superstitious simpletons.

To elevate man Vivekananda identifies him with God. "The only God to worship is the human soul in the human body," he declared. "Of course, all animals are temples too, but man is the highest, the Taj Mahal of temples."²

In his desire to elevate man, Vivekananda put forward the idea that the highest divine substance—*Brahma*—is personified in millions of ordinary living people and therefore the worship of God is tantamount to serving man. He called for the all-round development of the human personality and the assertion of man's right to happiness in this world and the fostering in the ordinary man of a sense of his own dignity. In a word, everything that Vivekananda proclaimed in India for the first time at the end of the last century, facilitated the development of the qualitatively new humanism which played an important part in the general upsurge of national consciousness and the struggle of the Indian people for independence.

In the literature of the peoples of India these two features of the new humanism, in my opinion, were manifested first of all and most vividly in the works of Rabindranath Tagore.

Though we do not agree with the idealistic basis of Vivekananda's humanism, we recognise that it possesses many features of active humanism manifested above all in a fervent desire to elevate man, to instil in him a sense of his own dignity, sense of responsibility for his own destiny and the destiny of all people, to make him strive for the ideals of good, truth and justice, to foster in man abhorrence for any suffering. The humanistic

ideal of Vivekananda is to a certain degree identical with Gorky's Man with a capital letter.

Such a humanistic interpretation of the essence of man largely determines the democratic nature of Vivekananda's world outlook.

The great merit of Vivekananda, in my opinion, is that he was one of the first in India to pay attention to the masses, to the suffering and misfortune of his compatriots; thereby he raised the paramount problem of India of his day. "I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall," he wrote. "They pay for our education, they build our temples, but in return they get kicks. They are practically our slaves. If we want to regenerate India, we must work for them."³

Vivekananda not only expressed sympathy and compassion for the oppressed people, as did at that time many liberal reformers who through partial reforms in the way of life sought somehow to ease the lot of their compatriots. He criticised the crying inadequacy of such reforms and told those who thought it possible through half-hearted measures and the begging of favours from the colonialists to solve the cardinal social and political problems of the age: "You talk of social reform? But what do you do? All that you mean by your social reform is either widow-remarriage or female-emancipation, or something of that sort . . . Such a scheme of reform may do good to a few no doubt, but of what avail is that to the whole nation?"⁴

Vivekananda sought to put up in contrast to such half-hearted reforms affecting only narrow spheres of society's life, cardinal demands for a change in the condition of the working masses. "The one problem you have is to give the masses their rights," he stressed.⁵ He told reformers that he himself was a bigger reformer than anyone of them. They wanted only partial, miserly reforms, while he called for a radical reform.

It seems to us that when Vivekananda spoke of a radical reform he meant a revolutionary change in the social system, in other words, for his views Vivekananda was rather a revolutionary than a reformer. Instinctively Vivekananda understood the active role of the masses in the historical development of his country. This is shown in particular by his statement

that the influence and power of the Kshatriya and the wealth of the Vaisya are possible only thanks to the physical work of the Sudra. It is they that form the true body of any society.

But he approached the solution of the problem of social inequality from the positions of Utopian Socialism, placing hopes in the good will and magnanimity of the propertied classes. He branded as a traitor anyone who having received an education and accumulated wealth at the cost of the blood of the toilers forgets about them. "You have long oppressed these forbearing masses, now is the time for their retribution," he stated.⁶

His ear keenly attuned to the voice of the epoch, Vivekananda was able to discern in it the still indistinct grumble of the toiling masses, rising to fight for their rights. "The lower classes are gradually awakening to this fact and making a united front against this, determined to exact their legitimate dues."⁷ Pointing out that the workers of Europe and America were already fighting for their legitimate rights, Vivekananda wrote: "Signs of this awakening have shown themselves in India, too, as is evident from the number of strikes among the lower classes nowadays."⁸

Witnessing this, Vivekananda foresaw the inevitability of class battles, utopically dreaming at the same time about the reconciliation of class contradictions through the voluntary renunciation of privileges by the higher classes. "When the masses will wake up," he wrote, "they will come to understand your oppression of them, and by a puff of their mouth you will be entirely blown away! It is they who have introduced civilisation amongst you; and it is they who will then pull it down . . . Therefore I say, try to rouse these lower classes from slumber by imparting learning and culture to them. When they will awaken—and waken one day they must—they also will not forget your good services to them and will remain grateful to you."⁹

He flayed social injustice and dreamed of a harmonious order in a society founded on the lofty ideals of freedom and equality.

"A time will come," Vivekananda wrote, "when the Sudras . . . with their inborn Sudra nature and habits . . . will gain absolute supremacy in every society. The first glow of the dawn of this new power has already begun to break slowly upon the Western world and the thoughtful are at

their wits' end to reflect upon the final issue of this fresh phenomenon. Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism and other like sects are the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow."¹⁰

Another great merit of Vivekananda: he was able intuitively to arrive at the idea that only the working class, which was just coming into being in India at that time, was the decisive force in social development. He said that when he saw the Bengali workers engaged in their tasks his feeling of hopelessness about his compatriots would vanish almost completely. He saw how they were gradually developing courage, becoming physically strong, fearless and energetic. Even street cleaners did not know that servility which was customary in natives. He was struck by these changes. While acclaiming the development of an industry which was bringing Indian deliverance from backwardness and the survivals of feudalism, Vivekananda was aware of many contradictions of capitalist society which turns the worker into a mere appendage of the machine.

Notwithstanding the haziness and abstract nature of his social ideals and world outlook as a whole, determined above all by the contradictory conditions of India's development, Vivekananda firmly believed that only the people who become masters of their destiny, could be the builders of the new society. He was convinced that only the people could regain for India her former greatness. That is why he held that it is the duty of all upright men of India to advance the cultural level of the people, to sow the seeds of the truth and knowledge in the hearts of the millions. In this respect the educational views of Vivekananda were closely intertwined with the world outlook of Rabindranath Tagore. "There are many things to learn," Vivekananda wrote, "we must struggle for new and higher things till we die."¹¹

In my opinion, the Utopian striving to reconcile class contradictions stemmed from a fervent desire to unite all the forces of the people for struggle against colonialism. In the hard years of colonial rule, the inhuman exploitation of the Indian people and the constant attempts to trample upon their dignity and national pride, Vivekananda was one of the few men in India who dared to come out boldly in defence of his people.

In the struggle against colonial oppression Vivekananda sought to find

support in the ancient Indian traditions, particularly religious ideology. He also strove to interpret the religious tenets and dogmas of Hinduism in such a way as to place religion at the defence of India's national interests, to unite the people to fight for independence. He declared that religion was necessary for defending man and society, for peace and tranquillity. "The one common ground that we have," he pointed out, "is our sacred tradition, our religion. That is the only common ground, and upon that we shall have to build."¹² At the same time it must be noted that, notwithstanding the idealistic roots of his world outlook, religious fanaticism was always alien to Vivekananda. He said that he would sooner prefer to have all his compatriots turn into confirmed atheists than into superstitious simpletons, because the desire for the supernatural and superstition were always a sign of weakness.

He wanted to see his compatriots strong and bold, proud and independent, considering this one of the major pledges of liberation from slavery. "Your country requires heroes; be heroes," he urged his compatriots. "Stand firm like a rock. Truth always triumphs . . . Strength is life, weakness is death, strength is felicity, life eternal, immortal; weakness is constant strain and misery . . . We become miserable, because we are weak."¹³

This call has not lost its significance in present-day India when the Indian people still have to accomplish so much in constructive endeavour and progress in order to get rid for ever of the curse of colonial slavery, poverty, darkness and ignorance. Is not there a contemporary ring to the words of Vivekananda that ". . . all great undertakings are achieved through mighty obstacles . . . Forward. We want infinite energy, infinite zeal, infinite courage, infinite patience, then only will great things be achieved."¹⁴

One cannot but assess highly Vivekananda's message, addressed to his compatriots groaning in the vice of colonial slavery, to be strong and brave in the struggle for their happiness and a better future, not to hope for divine providence, but to rely on their own forces. "The old religion said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is the atheist who does not believe in himself . . . Stand up, be bold, be

strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny.”¹⁵

All these calls, in my opinion, had only one purpose, to inspire the people to fight for their rights, to instil in their hearts confidence in their own strength. That is why we consider Vivekananda a fervent fighter against colonialism.

This indefatigable sower of the truth and flayer of every injustice walked thousands of kilometres along the roads of India. He beheld tears and grief, the starvation and death of his disinherited brothers and sisters. He spoke with hatred of the British colonialists who were guilty of the immeasurable misfortunes of the Indian people. He pointed out that India would have resources sufficient for a population five times greater than she had if its entire output were not exported. India was governed by terrorist methods. British soldiers were killing the men, ravishing the women and then going back home where they were given a pension for life at India's expense. Vivekananda well understood that such a situation could not last long and that the time was not distant when the people of India would break the chains of colonial slavery. While at first he thought that British domination would be overthrown through an uprising of the princes, subsequently he arrived at the conclusion that India's only hope was her masses. The higher classes were dead, physically and morally.

Vivekananda loved his motherland and its people. Herein lay the power of his patriotism, the significance of his entire selfless life sacrificed on the altar of the motherland.

His selfless love for the motherland exceeded his belief in divinity. He wrote that the only God who existed was his people, their hands, feet, eyes, ears, everywhere they covered everything. For him India was the only sky, the welfare of India was his welfare.

Vivekananda said: “Remember always that there is not in the world any other country whose institutions are really better in their aims and objects than the institutions of this land.”¹⁶ But sentiments of national narrow-mindedness were alien to him. He never sought isolation from outside influences and always urged his compatriots to assimilate the best that had been accumulated by the culture of all mankind. He said that the

cause of India's decline was her isolation from the other peoples of the world and that the only way out of stagnation was to return into the stream of the rest of the world. Motion is a sign of life, he stressed.

At the same time Vivekananda's searching mind noticed many things that were hidden under the outward glitter of Western civilisation. In his public statements Vivekananda relentlessly exposed bourgeois chauvinism, capitalist competition, the quest for profit, the fabulous luxury of the handful of exploiters and disastrous impoverishment and rightlessness of the millions of toilers, religious and racial discrimination, intrigue and violence.

In contrast to some Indian leaders of that age who naïvely believed in the miracles of Western civilisation, Vivekananda well understood the essence of imperialist freedom and democracy. "They that have money," he pointed out, "have kept the government of the land under their thumb, are robbing and drying up all the sap out of the people, and sending them as soldiers to fight and be slain on foreign shores, so that, in case of victory their coffers may be full of gold bought by the blood of subject-people on the field of battle."¹⁷ "All those things that you hear about—constitutional government, freedom, liberty, and parliaments—are but jokes."¹⁸

During his first visit to the United States Vivekananda proclaimed it the homeland of freedom. But on coming to know more intimately the order of things in that country he well understood the real value of that "freedom" and his former illusions were swiftly dispelled. He was indignant at the power of money, the unlimited rule of the financial plutocracy and its uncurbed drive for riches. Vivekananda said outright that his old conceptions of America as the future hope of emancipated mankind, were wrong. On returning from a tour of European countries he wrote that Europe resembled a military camp. Everywhere he felt the stench of war.

Vivekananda did not visit our country, although there is information that while abroad he met Russian revolutionaries who were in exile. Too bad, no material has been preserved about Vivekananda's conversation, for example, with the Russian revolutionary Kropotkin. It may be assumed that these meetings exerted a definite influence on Vivekananda. Assessing the development of events, he said that the future upheaval which should usher in a new era would come either from Russia or from China. Romain

Rolland quotes him as saying that he could not tell exactly which, but it would be one of these two countries.

One more aspect of Vivekananda's world outlook should be mentioned: his fervent desire to unite the peoples of India, his assertion that India was one State, notwithstanding the desire of the colonialists to stamp out the age-old striving of the peoples of India for consolidation. Although in this assertion Vivekananda proceeded above all from an idealistic concept of the unity of the people's spirit based on a common religion, nevertheless this does not minimise the role his views have played in creating present-day India as a united, monolithic and peace-loving State.

Vivekananda's impassioned call to general fraternity and unity of India's peoples, to the abolition of religious and communal discord, and of caste prejudices were combined with an appeal for peace and friendship among all the nations of the world, which is the cornerstone of the Indian tradition, the main content of the Indian national character.

Urging people to be fearless and bold, to fight the dark forces for their happiness and a better future, Vivekananda at the same time declared that it was hopeless and useless to try and rule the world by force of arms. Vivekananda called for the establishment of friendly relations between all nations, based on love of men for each other. That is why we must regard Vivekananda as one of the initiators in India of the most humane movement of our time, the peace movement.

In recent years, studying various problems of Indian philosophy, I had occasion to read many works about Vivekananda written in India and other countries, I have also discussed various aspects of his teaching with scientists of different countries. To my mind, there are quite contradictory, at times mutually exclusive, opinions and views on many questions related to an assessment of the world outlook and activities of Vivekananda. Unable to discuss in detail all the various appraisals, I will merely speak of two diametrically opposite views of Vivekananda's world outlook which one finds at times in the works of foreign scientists. On the one hand, in my opinion, there is a tendency to regard Vivekananda merely as an idealist philosopher, a religious mystic, that is, to stress only one side of his teaching. At times the proponents of such an interpretation try to

stress the all but supernatural character of his personality as, for example, Swami Abhedananda says that Vivekananda was a preacher of the truth who arose, like a gigantic comet, over the horizon.¹⁹

On the other hand, I think that some authors go to the other extreme, trying to picture Vivekananda as all but a Marxist. Bhupendranath Dutt writes that the Marxist will be surprised when he sees that the ideas of Marx are embodied in the views of Vivekananda.²⁰

Both assertions seem wrong to me.

Vivekananda's world outlook can be properly understood and evaluated when examining it in the inseparable connection with the entire economic, social, political and cultural life of India in his time. It reflects many of the contradictions inherent in the ideologists of the advanced Indian intelligentsia who took the road of struggle for national liberation but at that time still had no clear-cut and definite ideological foundation and philosophical basis.

Vivekananda's place in the development of India's social thought can be properly understood only by considering it a logical development of the ideology of religious and social reformation started in the first half of the 19th century by Rammohan Roy.

A one-sided appraisal of Vivekananda can thus lead to wrong conclusions and generalisations about the development of social thought in India at the threshold of the 19th and 20th centuries. In my opinion, a parallel could be drawn here with Leo Tolstoi. The world outlook of the great Russian writer was assessed differently in our country. It was only the writings of V. I. Lenin about Tolstoi, in which the contradictory nature of his views was revealed and the strong and weak sides of his world outlook were examined, that laid the foundation for a genuinely scientific study of his immense heritage, of his intricate and contradictory views.

It seems to me that for a proper understanding of the role and importance of Vivekananda it is necessary to ascertain the intricate interconnection of traditions and innovation in his world outlook and all his activities.

It goes without saying that Vivekananda must not be regarded merely as an idealistic philosopher and religious mystic who tried to put up in

opposition to the materialist scientific world outlook various religious philosophical dogmas of Hinduism.

By his attempt to revive the ancient religious philosophical traditions and adapt religion to the requirements of the present age, Vivekananda objectively helped to popularise among the masses the ideas of liberation, and imparted to these ideas the nature of a sacred religious duty.

I have discussed earlier the democratic views of Vivekananda which enable some scholars to consider him a socialist.

Vivekananda persistently sought a way out of his country's plight. Although his socio-economic and political views had elements of eclecticism, a combination of spontaneous rebellious spirit against social injustice, social Utopia, of the ideas of reformism and revolutionary protest, notwithstanding the historical conditioning and class limitations of his philosophical and sociological views, his world outlook as a whole played a constructive part in the development of the national liberation movement in India, in rallying the Indian people to struggle against colonialism.

His historical merit, in my opinion, is that he was one of the first ideologists of the epoch of national awakening who openly and resolutely called for active struggle to remake society and to win independence. But his religious idealistic world outlook prevented him from properly understanding and appraising life around him.

In his book *Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru rightly determines Vivekananda's place in the general struggle of the Indian people for national independence, thereby providing the requisites for a complete, objective analysis of his world outlook.

Much could be said and written about Vivekananda, many arguments could be advanced upholding different standpoints in an effort to explain his intricate and inimitable world outlook. More works about him will no doubt be written both in India and other countries and this is fine if they help understand more fully and deeply the ideas of the great patriot. We can safely say that many years will pass, many generations will come and go, Vivekananda and his time will become the distant past, but never will there fade the memory of the man who all his life dreamed of a better future for his people, who did so much to awaken his compatriots and

move India forward, to defend his much-suffering people from injustice and brutality. Like a rocky cliff protecting a coastal valley from storm and bad weather, from the blows of ill winds and waves, Vivekananda fought courageously and selflessly against the enemies of his motherland.

Together with the Indian people, Soviet people who already know some of the works of Vivekananda published in the USSR, highly revere the memory of the great Indian patriot, humanist and democrat, impassioned fighter for a better future for his people and all mankind.

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VIVEKANANDA AND INDIAN NATIONALISM

The only justification for this presentation is to suggest how Swami Vivekananda's relationship to the nationalist movement appears to an observer whose interests are deeply engaged with the historical process of India in the nineteenth century, but who is himself alien to her cultural and religious tradition. India at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century is, for many reasons, one of the most fascinating of times and places, but there are two that are of special importance. In the first place, it was one of the great moments of cultural confrontation, not, as it is so often stated, of the East and the West, but of modern, scientific culture with a traditional culture. It is true, of course, that this scientific, or technologically, oriented society had its contemporary home in Western Europe, but its really significant aspect was its universality, its ability to find a lodging in the most diverse civilizations. This ability differentiated the impact of the nineteenth century western culture from all previous meetings of civilizations, where religious norms had militated against acceptance of cultural values on a large scale. This peculiarity of western culture in the nineteenth century was not, of course, clearly understood at the time, but its recognition provides one of the most useful keys for understanding what was happening in India in the nineteenth century—and, indeed, what is happening today. It is part of the greatness of Swami Vivekananda that he was able to articulate this vital aspect of the western world. At a time when some of the strongest voices in India were equating any accommodation with western ideas as an attack on the traditional religious values of India, Vivekananda argued that the science was neutral ; it could enrich, not weaken Indian life.

A second reason for the interest that is attached to late nineteenth century India is that here, in a quite unique way, can be seen the growth and development of a great national movement. We have grown so accustomed to the emergence of new nation States that we are apt to forget how extraordinary this whole episode was to human history. Compared

* (Address delivered at India House, New York, USA, April 18, 1963)

to many other countries, where, as in the Belgian Congo, the attainment of national independence was sudden and dramatic, India's development takes place almost in slow motion ; nowhere else, perhaps, can the complexities and ambiguities of the growth of modern nationalism be seen so clearly.

"Nationalism" is a blanket word used, not very precisely, to cover a variety of responses and activities identified with numerous attempts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to create unified national States. The characteristic content of European nationalism included such diverse elements as demands for written constitutions, emphasis on shared history, glorification of a cultural tradition, and faith in the creation of a self-sufficient economy and political institutions based on popular representation. All of these elements had a place in Indian nationalism, but added to them were others, including an impulse to unity that was deeply rooted in the Indian political and social tradition and a complex historical situation unmatched elsewhere in the world. The conventional simplification of three periods—Hindu, Muslim, British—only hinted at the political palimpsest, for within each of them were forces that reached backwards and forwards.

In an attempt to understand the history of modern India one must be prepared for a bewildering variety of men and movements, many of them working at cross purposes, and also for many false starts and, seemingly at least, for many failures. For the nationalist movement itself, no single rubric can cover the contribution of men so diverse in talents and temperaments as Ram Mohan Ray, Dayananda Saraswati and Aurobindo Ghose, and to attempt to depict the story of Indian nationalism as a unity is at once to falsify and to impoverish it. Swami Vivekananda's role is, in some ways, contradictory to the main trends, but it is one that adds enduring richness to the total story.

A main trend—although not the only one—in the story of Indian nationalism in the nineteenth century is the one that leads from Ram Mohun Ray to the early years of the National Congress. Within this general movement, certain broad, general emphases can be identified. One is a demand for the reform of Indian—specifically Hindu—social customs,

with the norm being western practice, even though this was not always so stated. Another common feature to the movement that begins with Ram Mohun is to be found in a religious interest: the search for a common core of religious belief, the denunciation of beliefs that were regarded as superstitions, and a return to an earlier and purer faith. In political terms, there was an emphasis on representative institutions, coupled with a demand that the British should make it possible for the educated classes to share in administrative and political power. These classes, it was argued, had worked their passage through their devotion to social and religious reform. After the founding of the National Congress these generalized attitudes found expression in demands for enlarged Legislative Councils, equality of treatment in recruitment for the Civil Service, and lower military expenditure.

These demands were an admirable expression of political liberalism, but they contained little that would stir men's hearts or move them to visions of self-sacrifice. Nor, in truth, was there in them much that was specifically Indian, that spoke of the great traditional values that were enshrined in the social framework known to the masses. There were, however, many movements, both inside and outside the institutional structure of the nationalist movement, that were giving evidence of a new growth of self-confidence in the Hindu tradition and were asserting the viability of Indian ideals. Dayananda Saraswati and his followers constituted one of the most potent forces that spoke for Hindu values; while from within the Congress, B. G. Tilak having declared that "in politics there is no benevolence," went on to proclaim the availability of sources of inspiration for political action from within Hinduism.¹ But most clearly, and for his time, most usefully, the assertion of India's greatness came in the 1890's from Swami Vivekananda.

Following his master, Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda accepted the Hindu tradition in all its complexity and richness, defending at times precisely those features which reformers of all kinds—both in the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj—had found most distasteful, as, for example, idol worship. "Those reformers who preach against image worship," he wrote in 1901, "to them I say,—'Brothers! If you are fit to worship God-

without-Form, discarding any internal help, do so, but why do you condemn others who cannot do the same?"² Aside from idolatry, the aspect of Indian society most vigorously condemned by western critics and Indian reformers was the institution of caste. Vivekananda also met this challenge with superb self-confidence, contrasting the spirit of the West where "competition, cruel, cold, heartless, is the law," with India, where the "law is caste, the breaking of competition, checking its forces, mitigating its cruelties, smoothing the passage of the human soul through this mystery of life."³ In speeches made all over the country he stressed again and again the theme of Indian and Hindu greatness. "Why should you feel ashamed," he asked, "to take the name of Hindu, which is your greatest and most glorious possession? This national ship of ours, ye children of the Immortals, my countrymen, has been plying for ages, carrying civilization and enriching the whole world with its inestimable treasures."⁴ This was a new and intoxicating doctrine for a generation fed upon the criticism of Indian society by many Indian as well as Western writers. The contrast with the denunciations of Hindu society common in Western writings of the time is plain enough ; but these same criticisms had been made, often with more sting, by men standing within the tradition—Keshub Chander Sen, M. G. Ranade, and, in a very different way, but even more pungently, by Dayananda in *Satyartha Prakash*. Vivekananda's praise of India becomes at times a prose poem as in the famous passage from his speech at Colombo in 1897 :

"If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed *Punya Bhumi*, to be the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for *Karma*, the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all the land of introspection and of spirituality,—it is India."⁵

Perhaps no Indian before or since has spoken so movingly of his love for his country.

Yet there is a vital element in Swami Vivekananda's emphasis on Hindu greatness that must not be overlooked ; it was never exclusive and, above

all, it was never anti-Muslim or anti-Christian. Tilak in his own way had glorified the Hindu past, but, there is a note of exclusion in it, a rejection of the West, and all that the West meant in terms of cultural values. Young India at the beginning of the nineteenth century was too open-minded, too ready to accept the message of modernity, to be wholly satisfied with any nationalism that excluded an area of experience that, for good or ill, had become part of the historic heritage. Swami Vivekananda demanded a full acceptance of the Hindu tradition, but his interpretation made possible an acceptance of other values and traditions. On his return from America and Europe he hymned the greatness of India, but there is at all times in his writings an awareness of the strength of the Western tradition. "We cannot do without the world outside India; it was our foolishness that we thought we could, and we have paid the penalty by about a thousand years of slavery", he told a Madras audience.⁶ And caste, which he had praised in one context, came in for ringing denunciation for having led to such "degradation . . . that the greatest minds of a country have been discussing . . . whether I may touch you or you touch me" . . . while the nation was being destroyed.⁷

While his work to restore to his people a sense of pride in their own past was perhaps Vivekananda's greatest contribution to the nationalist movement, scarcely less important was his insistence that the ideals of strength and freedom necessary for nationalism could be found within the Hindu tradition. Both India's critics and friends had tended to see life-negation and quiescence as the characteristics of Hindu spirituality; for one group this indicated India's unfitness for participation in the modern world, while for the other it was a symptom of her greater wisdom. Rejecting both the criticism and the praise, Vivekananda argued that the distinctive feature of the tradition was not the denial of the richness of human personality but an affirmation of human freedom and power. "Strength, strength, is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page . . . It is the only literature in the world where you find the word *abhih*, "fearless," used again and again; in no other scripture in the world is this adjective applied either to God or to man . . . Everything that can weaken us as a race we have had for the last thousand years . . . We have become real earthworms,

crawling at the feet of everyone who dares to put his foot on us . . . The Upanishads are the great mine of strength . . . They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable . . . Aye, this is the one scripture in the world, of all others, that does not talk of salvation, but freedom.”⁸

It is difficult to say how direct the relationship of this emphasis on strength is to the later movements associated with the Partition of Bengal. Some writers, notably Benoy Sarkar, have made a very persuasive case for Vivekananda as a fountain head of inspiration for a new emphasis “on individuals, on persons, in his attempt to harness energism to their thoughts and activities.”⁹ This interpretation was carried even further by Bhupendranath Datta, Swami Vivekananda’s youngest brother, who argues that the Swami’s primary motivation was the uplift of the masses, and that to achieve this, he had once sought to form a revolutionary group to overthrow foreign rule.¹⁰ On the failure of this attempt, the argument runs, he saw that what was needed was “a band of selfless workers who would educate and uplift the people”. This interpretation must be regarded with considerable scepticism, but at least it points to what is truly significant in Vivekananda’s part in the nationalist movement: the clarification in a new and exciting way of the role of the Indian tradition as a source for a vigorous patriotism. He caught up many ideas that were abroad in nineteenth century Indian thought, and transmuted them into a powerful force that has enriched modern Indian nationalism. Attitudes towards the past that are commonplace now, can be traced directly to the glowing genius of Swami Vivekananda, and his ideas are familiar even to those who do not know his name.

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VIVEKANANDA IN AMERICA

When Swami Vivekananda came to the United States in 1893 the impact upon that gathering at the World's Fair is something that we find difficult to imagine now ; we are so inured to all kinds of visitors in the United States in this century. We have had so many experiences of help from afar that what Swami tried to do would not seem so strange today.

He was, as you know, only thirty and his coming at all was a kind of a miracle. He had read in the papers in India that there was going to be a Parliament of Religions in connection with the World's Fair and some of the Indians (for instance the Brahmo Samaj, to which he had once belonged) were sending representatives ; and, of course, Islam had representatives ; so did all the parts of the Christian world, and the Buddhist world, but there was no representative of Orthodox Hinduism. Hinduism isn't an organized, a churchly, an ecclesiastical religion at all and therefore if it were necessary to name a representative of Hinduism (at least in the 1890's ; perhaps now it might be managed), it would have been impossible. The young monk, who had been through extraordinary experiences in the preceding twelve years, decided that he should go to America.

With the aid of some friends and those who believed in him enough money was subscribed to get him across the ocean. Of course, getting here in the 1890's was only one part of the struggle, one part of the story. The civilization of the United States was utterly unprepared to accept a Hindu *sannyasin* in a yellow robe, preaching a doctrine which at that time sounded very strange indeed. He did not at first stay at Chicago. He wandered a bit and made some American friends. Professor Wright of Harvard College was instrumental in getting him to Chicago as a representative of Hinduism.

From the time when he spoke at the end of the first day's attendance at that gathering, he more or less dominated that World's Parliament of Religions. He had, it seems, a very remarkable voice. It was by means of his singing that he had first attracted the attention of Ramakrishna in the

* (Address delivered at the Vivekananda Centenary Dinner at New York, U.S.A.)

early days of Calcutta. Before he went out to Dakshineswar they met at the house of a friend and Narendra sang. That was when Ramakrishna first became aware of him, first thought that he might be the instrument of his mission.

When he was eighteen he went out to Dakshineswar. He hired a carriage and went that considerable distance to sit with the others at the feet of Ramakrishna and from then on continued to frequent, although not steadily because he was a sceptic—Naren was a member of the Brahmo Samaj.

He had joined the Brahmo Samaj when he was fifteen. It is a rationalist, universalist society in which the Tagore family was extremely important. It flourished chiefly in Bengal, but in a good many other parts of India too. Those high-minded people, akin to our Unitarians and Quakers, had their highest example, I think, in Rabindranath Tagore. In a novel of his called *Gora*, an early novel, you can see the opposition that arises in orthodox Hindu society between the Brahmo Samaj, the caste system, and the regular orthodox Hindu. Naren was freed, liberated from all that by the Brahmo Samaj three years before he went to Ramakrishna, but evidently in his personality, in his being, there was a demand for some mystical experience, some mystical assurance which pure reason, the Brahmo Samaj, could not give. The Brahmo Samaj is really like our Community Church or the Ethical Culture Society or several other organizations that we have in the West in which pure reason and loving-kindness towards all people are supposed to prevail. However, it provides for no mystical experience as such, and it seems that in Naren's character there was a demand for this. That is what drove him to Ramakrishna.

He was with Ramakrishna for five years, not continuously, because at first he was a sceptic. We have the full records of all those questions and answers and it was difficult for him at first to admit the extremes of mystical experience to which he was subjected. His scepticism was vanquished by one of the most extraordinary personalities that the history of religion has ever afforded—that is Sri Ramakrishna himself.

There are very few recorded examples in all of history of anybody with such extra-sensory (as we say nowadays) or such remarkable extra-material

powers. Those, of course, impressed a whole generation, but they impressed Narendra most of all. It was at the death of Ramakrishna, five years later, that the twelve boys took the names that they afterwards used and became the Ramakrishna Mission.

Now all of that preceded Vivekananda's arrival in Chicago and nobody in America knew anything about it. They didn't know in the first place what the difference was between Hindu intellectualism, Hindu philosophy, and a mystical experience. Vivekananda didn't mention his master for two solid years—1893 to 1895. He talked about the Upanishads and the *Gita*; he talked about universalism and the equality of all religions and the fact that all sacrifices are welcome; he talked a kind of universalism that was not totally alien to the Americans who listened. Just the same there must have been a lot of it that was alien.

We are told that seven to ten thousand people (and this is without microphones) were present at every session, that is, every day, of that Parliament of Religions.

It was opened by the only American Cardinal of the time, the Cardinal Archbishop of Baltimore. He was followed by dignitaries of all the churches, all the religions of the world. Nevertheless the thirty-year-old Indian monk, the "Hindu Monk" he was called usually, was the dominant personality. He was followed through the streets of the World's Fair by crowds (we have photographs and records of all this). And, of course, he was strongly tempted to remain in the United States.

The curiosity which he aroused here was only partly religious and intellectual; some of it was simply curiosity. But there was a keener interest on the part of some people, who had no previous knowledge of Vedanta.

William James used to go to visit Vivekananda when he was in New York. William James visited him more than once and asked him questions about Hindu philosophy and so on. I dare say that in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* the result of Swami Vivekananda's discussions may be seen in many things that don't have anything to do with Hinduism. When James is discussing mysticism in general I think he is relying to some extent on Swami Vivekananda.

He had of course devoted American followers. Aside from philosophers and those who wanted to ask him questions, there were those who wanted to follow him, to adopt a discipline. And when he went to the Thousand Islands, in the St. Lawrence River, was the first time that he mentioned his master. Then he spoke of Ramakrishna. I think this was a miracle of tact, among other things. Because the Western mind is so slow to admit the possibility of a mystical experience, the idea of a supreme mystic, one who has had all the mystical experiences, would be very difficult for Americans to accept right away. After two years they could understand and they began to know what he was talking about. He did the same thing in London but he had less time to do it in.

What I am trying to say about the impact of Vivekananda in the 1890's is that it was totally new, absolutely strange, but nevertheless did not leave this country untouched. There were many people from coast to coast, here, there, and the next place, who retained out of the visit and the return a notion of the universality of religion, the acceptability of sacrifice and the progression of the soul of man through what Ramakrishna called the two Hindu truths, *Dvaita* and *Advaita*, the dualism of material and spirit and the monism of spirit alone. This, according to Ramakrishna, was the progression of all Hinduism.

Most of us live in dualism. Practically everybody lives in dualism because the body and mind, and spirit, are two different things in our lives. But by a progression which Vivekananda tried to teach it is possible to arise to a monism which is the *Advaita* of Ramakrishna—that was his teaching, and along with that, of course, the truth of all religions, the truth of all sincere beliefs. It is a little bit like some of the verses in the *Gita* where the Lord Sri Krishna says "every sacrifice, every offering, if it is sincere, is acceptable to the Lord." This was the teaching.

The third element in it concerns service, the alleviation of human suffering. Ramakrishna himself, as a profound mystic, really unfitted for the world and unfitted for travel and all the slings and arrows that he would have had to put up with, could not very well undertake anything like the alleviation of human suffering on a big scale. He was certainly not an organizer and in common with most of the founders of the great religious

or spiritual movements, he needed a St. Paul, somebody who could get it going, who could organize the desirable, earthly part of his mission, and that is what Vivekananda did by means of the monastic order which has done so wonderfully well in this century. Everybody who has travelled in the East, especially in India in times of riot, famine, death, or violence, knows what the Ramkrishna Mission has meant to the poor, to the suffering. This is the third part of Vivekananda's mission, which has nothing to do with philosophy but nevertheless, to him, it was equal. He had those three missions and fulfilled them all.

It is his hundredth birthday that we celebrate.

VIVEKANANDA'S CENTENARY

Although the basic facts about the life and career of Narendranath Datta, (later) Swami Vivekananda, are fairly well known, I'll begin by running through these very briefly. He was born a hundred years ago this year on January 12, 1863, he met Sri Ramakrishna when he was eighteen, that being in 1881, and was with him until Ramakrishna's death in 1886. By this time he had become the natural leader of the young disciples of Ramakrishna. At the end of 1886, in fact on Christmas eve, these disciples took a vow that they would become monks, and in 1887, they took the formal monastic vow and assumed monastic names. These names were mostly given them by Vivekananda himself, and some of them referred to some remarks which Ramakrishna had made about that particular individual. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, there was a period during which the boys gathered together in an old house at Baranagore, their first monastery. At that time, also, they went on long pilgrimages all over India. It was during this period from 1887 to 1893 that Narendranath, now known under various monastic names, (actually, Vivekananda was the third name he assumed) wandered all over India, and it was during these wanderings that he learned the actual conditions of Indian life and saw, with his own eyes, the terrible poverty and squalor and ignorance in which the masses were living. He also learned to appreciate their extraordinary potential as human beings, and it was then that he was filled with the missionary ardour which made him determined to accomplish a great economic, educational, psychological, spiritual revolution in India. And, then in 1893, he got the opportunity to go to the United States and take part unofficially in the so-called Parliament of Religions, which was being held in Chicago. He went there, and his personality, and his natural powers as a speaker made an extraordinary impression. And for the next three, nearly four years, he was in the United States lecturing, founding groups of students, and finally a centre in New York. He also went to England, and returned by way of

Address delivered in the Hollywood Temple of the Vedanta Society of Southern California on January 20, 1963.



Swami Vivekananda Temple

Europe to India in 1897. That year he and his brother monks got together and formally founded the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, monastery and mission. The land was acquired and the plans were made for future buildings on the spot where the centre of the Math and Mission now stands, Belur Math on the Ganges, outside Calcutta, not very far along the river from the Dakshineswar temple, where Ramakrishna spent almost all of his adult life.

In 1899 Vivekananda came back to the United States by way of Europe and England, and was in California, where he spent six weeks at the house in Pasadena, which now belongs to the Vedanta Society of Southern California, and which we can visit, and see the room in which Vivekananda lived, very much as it was at that time. In 1900 he returned to India, already a very sick man, worn out by all the work, and the travelling he had done, and the hardships he had experienced in his earlier life, and on July 4th, 1902 he died. This death, however, is widely believed to have been voluntary as we know death can be in certain individuals. He was in fact not at all unwell that day, he ate a hearty meal, went for a walk, had long discussions with his brother monks, and then retired for meditation, saying that he did not wish to be disturbed, and passed into *samadhi*, and life left the body. Looking back over the weeks that had preceded this, it becomes evident that Vivekananda had been systematically freeing himself from his duties at the Belur Math and preparing others to take them over, and in every way getting ready to lay down his responsibilities and to pass on.

Now this is a story in the very briefest outline of the life of this individual, Vivekananda. Of course, the most important thing about it for us is his encounter with Ramakrishna. George Orwell in his essay on Gandhi begins by saying that every saint should be judged guilty until he is proved innocent, a remark with which Ramakrishna would have entirely agreed. Ramakrishna was often saying to his disciples: "Test me as the money-changer tests the coins." "Before you decide to accept a *guru* watch him by day and by night." This was the attitude of Ramakrishna himself, and the enormous value and significance of Vivekananda to us is that he more than any other of the disciples, or indeed anyone who encountered Ramakrishna, *tested him*. Vivekananda was the greatest, the most acute

test to which Ramakrishna was subjected, as a human phenomenon, on earth. You have this boy, eighteen years old, a college intellectual, an athlete, a boy burning with idealism, which nevertheless up to that point had been somewhat undirected. In this way, he was rather like the young figure of T. E. Lawrence, Colonel Lawrence of Arabia—he was subjecting himself to rigorous austerities, he had made up his mind to practise complete chastity, he watched his diet, he slept on the floor, he went through all kinds of preparatory disciplines, but perhaps without being quite consciously aware why he did them. He was looking for something to dedicate himself to. Lawrence's self-dedication ended in tragedy. Vivekananda's self-dedication ended in the greatest conceivable triumph.

Now, this extremely sceptical boy, who is already rather disgusted by the reformist doctrines of the Brahmo Samaj, the group which was trying very worthily to reform some of the abuses of Hinduism, but seemed to have no real spiritual juice, no really exciting message to give boys such as Narendrababy, half-seer, often unconscious of his outward surroundings, stumbling like a drunken man, coming down out of the great superconscious state to talk the clearest sense, in the humblest and most forceful language, about God, life, and death. Ramakrishna lived in an absolute present: If indeed God exists at all, he must be, in one of Gerald Heard's great phrases, "an appalling instantaneity." He has nothing to do with the future, or the past. He is right now, every moment, and this power is imminent, can come through any vehicle which can receive it. And here was Ramakrishna staggering, swaying, intoxicated by this power which he felt all round him at every moment, and trying, trying to force his mind down, in order to be able to speak to the people around him, because most of the time, he didn't see them as individuals, he simply saw them as God, God, God everywhere. When *we* think of the actual situation, we think of Cuba and Castro, and the two K's, and whether a certain actress will marry a certain actor, the prospects of baseball, and football and such things, all these things, worthy or unworthy, relatively speaking, as they may or may not be, are involved, of course, with the past and the future, and with anxiety. The only thing that is absolutely *now* is God, everything else has strings

attached to it, tugging us into the future, or hooking us back from the past, and saying *oops*, not so fast, be careful, go slow. So now Narendra meets this man, doesn't know what to make of him at all, and as you all know, this incredible scene takes place. Ramakrishna takes Narendra outside the room, and, when they are alone, he says: "Oh, my Lord, at last you have come, why have you kept me waiting so long? I know you. I know who you are. You are not Narendranath Datta, you are the Lord Nara." This boy is absolutely horrified. He thinks, well, this man is mad. And, he is dazed, embarrassed, he has only one thought, to get away, but then he goes back into the room, and this encounter seems like a dream, because there is Ramakrishna sitting talking the most perfect sense to the other devotees, and he seems no more mad than Narendra himself. And so you have the extraordinary comedy of these encounters, encounters in which, again and again, Ramakrishna is expressing the idea that he and the individual, temporarily, for convenience, called Narendranath, are in fact two beings whose relation has been eternal, outside time and space, and who have now for some inscrutable reason, come to this earth, for the benefit of humanity certainly, but how or why at that particular moment, is beyond all our power to know. These two beings have made a rendezvous, as it were, in the military sense, in space and time, to come from opposite directions to combine their forces. On another occasion, as you will remember, Ramakrishna touches Narendranath and suddenly the room, Calcutta, his parents, the British, everything vanishes, and he sees what the Buddhists call "the clear light of the void," the great immensity of pure consciousness, in which there is no you, or me, or it, or they, and he cries out in terror, because to see this is, until you are ready for it, simply like death, you see the annihilation of your little personal self in this great whirlpool of light. He cries out, "What are you doing to me, I have got my parents at home." And Ramakrishna roars with laughter and stops it, by a touch. Then, another time, Ramakrishna takes him and puts him into deep unconsciousness, this boy who thought he had the strongest will in Calcutta—how could this man possibly hypnotize him? Ramakrishna said later, "In deep unconsciousness, I talked to him, and he told me who he was," meaning of course, he recognized the eternal relationship between them, and said Rama-

krishna, "when Naren knows who he is, then it will be time for him to give up the body."

What we are all vitally concerned with here ; indeed, what anybody who takes even the faintest interest in any religion is vitally concerned with is this question, "Is there a God?" Now we hear of somebody who says there is, who says he has seen God, "like I see you," he says, "only clearer." So now, we think to ourselves, this is all very well, but why should we believe this man? So, now what we need is an appliance to test this man, is he a crook, is he a hypocrite, is he insane, is he doing it for money, is there some ulterior motive in all of this, or not? We want to take Ramakrishna and expose him to this appliance, and x-ray him, and look right through him, and see if it's true or not. Naren was such an appliance. And I know, to me personally, all approach to this question really begins by our belief in Naren's doubt. Naren's doubt was for us, he doubted for us, he went on doubting in a way that we think we wouldn't dream of doubting. We say, if I met Ramakrishna, of course I should *know* he was the Son of God. Delightful fantasy! How many people met Christ? They said, "Oh take him away, another nationalist fanatic." Even Pontius Pilate, a very intelligent man, though slightly disturbed, just thought he was maybe a bit touched by the sun. We wouldn't be convinced nearly as easily as we think. We would, probably, pass him without turning our heads. Who knows what great saints we may not have passed by, in the course of our lives? There's a charming story about a well-known lady Catholic who went to see a very remarkable Catholic priest, downtown in Los Angeles and she said to him, "the trouble is, the church now-a-days has no saints." And the priest said, "Oh, yes, it has, you're quite mistaken," he said, "Look, there she is, Mrs. Gonzales, she's a saint." Of course the Catholic lady thought he was joking, and perhaps he was, but perhaps he wasn't. And isn't that really the way such beings exist in the world? There's a certain power perhaps which they use with a kind of teasing skill to prevent us from recognizing them. Anyhow, Naren doubted, and Naren probed, and Naren tested, and for that we cannot be grateful enough to him. Some people might think that, after all, he was very unreasonable to go on doubting so long, but that again is the measure of his greatness, because if Naren was going to

stop doubting, then he was going to believe with his whole heart and mind and soul, and he was going to dedicate his entire life to that belief. If you convince me, that's very nice, and I say "alright, yes, I believe," but the ceiling doesn't fall! But once Naren believed, everything was turned inside out. If Ramakrishna was right, then everybody else was mad, because the life of the world is mad in the presence of the great knower of the reality; completely, completely mad. It says in the Gita:

We are awake in what we think is the day
but to the seer it is darkness. And the
seer is awake in what we think of as
night, which to him is the brilliant light
of the sun of knowledge.

Now we pass on to the other great service rendered by Vivekananda to mankind. These two services are the testing of Ramakrishna, on the one hand, and Vivekananda's concern for India on the other hand. Vivekananda was, as I said, profoundly moved by the realization of India's poverty and the state of her oppression under the British colonial rule. And he proposed a revolution. The spirit of this revolution enormously influenced Gandhi and influences Indian political thought to this day. Vivekananda in this sense is a great figure in Indian history, one of the very greatest historical figures that India has ever produced. But it must always be noted that Vivekananda's revolution, Vivekananda's nationalism, were not like the kind of revolution, the kind of nationalism, which we associate with other great leaders, admirable and noble as they may be. Vivekananda was far greater than that. In fact, when one sees the full range of his mind, one is astounded. Vivekananda looked toward the West, not simply as a mass of tyrants exploiting various parts of Asia, and other undeveloped areas, but as future partners, people who had very, very much to offer. At the same time, without any false humility, he faced the West and said, "we have fully as much and more to offer *you*. We offer you this great tradition of spirituality, which can produce, even now, today, a supremely great figure such as Ramakrishna. You can offer us medical services, trains that run on time, hygiene, irrigation, electric light. These are very important, we want them, and we admire some of your qualities immensely."

One of the most enchanting things about Vivekananda is the way he was eternally changing sides when he was speaking to different people ; he could denounce the British in words of fire, but again he would turn on the Indians and say, "You cannot manufacture one pin, and you dare to criticize the British!" And then he would speak of the awful materialism of the United States, and on the other hand, he would say that no women in the world were greater, and that the treatment of women in India was absolutely disgraceful. And so in every way, he was integrating, he was seeing the forces for good, the constructive forces, in the different countries, and saying, "why don't we exchange?" So Vivekananda's revolution was a revolution for everybody, a revolution which would in the long run be of just as much use to the British as to India. Vivekananda's nationalism, the call to India to recognize herself—this again was not nationalism in the smaller sense, it was a kind of super-nationalism, a kind of internationalism sublimated. You all know the story that Vivekananda was so fond of, about the lion that was brought up with a lot of sheep. Now another lion comes out of the forest and the sheep all run away, and the little lion that had been brought up thinks it's a sheep and runs away too, and now the pursuing lion grabs it, takes it over to a pool of water and says, "Look at yourself, you're a lion." This is what Vivekananda was doing to the Indian people. He remarks in one of his letters, that the marvellous thing about all of the Western nations is that they know that they are nations. He said jealousy is a curse of India. Indians cannot learn to co-operate with each other. Why can't they learn from the co-operation of Western nations with each other? I'm quoting all this because by considering all these different attitudes that Vivekananda took, one sees the immense scope and integrity of his good will. He was really on everybody's side, on the side of the West, and on the side of India, and he saw far, far into the future ; his political prophecies are extremely interesting, and he said repeatedly, that the great force, which would finally have to be reckoned with was China. He also remarked on visiting Europe for the last time in 1900 that he smelled war everywhere, which was more than most professional statesmen did, at that time.

VIVEKANANDA wore himself out in service ; he lectured, he formed

centres, he agitated for the Ramakrishna Mission to begin relief work in floods and famines, to build hospitals and schools, he wanted to take the whole of India and educate it—in fact, he was attempting a superhuman task, and yet he did not fail because the spirit behind this energy has remained and inspires Indians to this very day. Toward the end of his life he passes into a final phase, where all this burning zeal, this anxiety, this passion to get things accomplished, begins to fall from him, and he enters a phase of calm, of lack of anxiety. Of course, one of the most misleading things about life is that there are two kinds of calm, two kinds of lack of anxiety, two kinds of resignation to events. It's like a powerful river running between two banks. On the one side is the resignation of utter sloth, apathy, laziness, indifference, cold self-obsession ; on the other side of the river is the calm of the great saint, who finally says, "all is well, in His will is our peace." And between these two banks is the raging river which in Sanskrit terminology is called the *guna* of *rajas*, the power which is behind rage and lust and appetite, but also behind heroic courage, energy, ambition, missionary zeal, the power which gets things done ; and every religious teacher, including Vivekananda pre-eminently, has said again and again that anything is better than to be on the bank of sloth, *tamas*, as it is called in Sanskrit, you must plunge into the river of *rajas*, but sooner or later you reach the other bank, and that other bank, which in Sanskrit is called *sattva*, is the bank of calm and acceptance. And so the lack of anxiety of the great saint is in fact the polar opposite of the lack of anxiety of a skidrow wino ; the great saint has no anxiety, because he relies absolutely on God, the wino relies only on the Salvation Army. But Vivekananda passed into this final phase of acceptance, and though it has been quoted and read very often, I am going to finish by reading you parts of a letter, which I always think one of the most beautiful things Vivekananda ever wrote. It was at the time when he was leaving the West, in 1900, after his second visit, and going back to India. And he wrote this letter on April 18, 1900, to Miss Josephine MacLeod, whom he called Joe. She was known of course to some of us, for she lived on into fairly recent times. "After all, Joe, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment, to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my

true nature ; works and doing good and so forth are all super-impositions. Now I again hear his voice, the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking, love dying, work becoming tasteless, the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the Master calling. 'I come Lord, I come.' . . . I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders, glad to enter peace. I leave none bound, I take no bonds. Whether this body will fall and release me, or I enter into freedom in the body, the old man is gone, gone for ever, never to come back again. The guide, the Guru, the leader, the teacher, has passed away ; the boy, the student, the servant is left behind. . . . Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst for power." (Imagine if Vivekananda could say that, what can the rest of us say!) "Now they are vanishing, and I drift. I come! Mother, I come!"

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Orator, Writer and Art Critic

"Never forget the glory of Human Nature! We are the Greatest God. . . . Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the Boundless Ocean which I Am . . .". Thus spake Vivekananda in America in 1895 which Romain Rolland, himself an enchanted soul of fine artistic intuition and sensibility, quoted with approbation as a representative thought of the Master whom he was describing in his remarkable book.¹ This great creed of Man the God was latent in the Indian atmosphere from the Upanishadic days, but it got a new orientation, a new spiritual valuation and a novel enrichment from Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. Nineteenth century in India was an age when there was a tremendous impact from the West in the thought world. The glamour of its material civilization, its rich literature, its concept of social and political ethics, its utilitarian creed and scientific deeds were not lost on the intellectuals.

Even the masses were waking up. The railway train, the electric telegraph and other scientific discoveries were creating havoc in the proletarian mind as much as Mill, Bentham, Ruskin, Rousseau, Tom Payne or Patrick Henry did to the educated. New wine was being poured into old bottles and the stirring within was translated and transmitted mainly through a progressive outlook towards a creative idealism. Originally there was an attempt, conscious and unconscious, to divorce it from the basic trends of old achievements and our heritage of the past. This acceptance of the new with the old was the great contribution which Bengal made to India, and to the world. We need not debate what exactly was the nature, import and impact of this nascence or renaissance. The role of Vivekananda in this galaxy of gallants is so impressive and important that he stands out as one of the beacon lights of the 'torch race of Indian renaissance'. In him not only the East and the West met but there was a constant and conscious attempt to find a bridge between materialistic development and spiritual needs, between a technological order and an aesthetic gain, between a medieval ethos and modern day values, based however on a spiritualised humanism.

In evolving this new concept, his somewhat sceptic and discerning soul had the great benefit of a touch with a universal soul like Shri Ramakrishna's, whom Rolland conceived as a meeting point, a rapport of all essences divine and human. His life was therefore not merely the story of a conscience, of a person who from a doubting Thomas became an ardent believer, but it was also the story of the vision of a splendid harmony where the past, the present and the future world mingled and blended in a grand aspiration of all races, all creeds and all ages. It was to be a reconciliation not only between India and America, between the East and the West, between men and women, but also between faith and reason, between conflicting passions and ideologies.

When we estimate Vivekananda as an orator, the first thing that would strike any audience would be the personality of the man, 'the look that Raphael has painted for us on the brow of the sistine child' as Nivedita puts it, and the evident sincerity of the speaker, apart from the richness and beauty of his thought and his fiery eloquence. All these combined would give an effect which would be electric. "Where others would talk of ways and means, he knew how to light a fire. Where others gave directions, he would show the thing itself".²

Some of us have vague ideas that Swamiji's fame as an orator was first recognised when he burst into the American scene in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in September, 1893. Many records are there, critical as well as otherwise, including not only newspaper reports but reminiscences of his admirers and disciples such as Sister Christine, Marie Louise Burke's *New Discoveries* add many hitherto unknown tit bits into the general panorama. The fact is that he was a born orator, he knew what he was saying and that in a masterly way. From the sun-swept shores of Kanya Kumarika to the snow-capped Himalayas, he had moved and prayed and preached the one cardinal fact of Indian culture—"We have to reach religion". "There are other and higher lessons that India can teach, but they are only for the learned. The lessons of mildness, gentleness, sympathy and brotherhood, everyone may learn, whether man, woman or child, learned or unlearned, without respect of race, caste or creed".³ The very manner of putting it was the characteristic trait of Vivekananda. Of course

his entry into the American scene through the Parliament of Religions gave it a world significance. Even in America, before the meeting of the Parliament, he had created an impression in the circle he moved about and Marie Louise Burke quotes a letter of Mrs. Wright, wife of Prof. John Henry Wright of Annisquam, Mass, dated August 29, 1893, to her mother.⁴ Apart from the fact that he had a wonderful command of the English language, and his voice was musical and his logic penetrating, his saffron robes created a devastating effect. According to Mrs. Wright "he was a most gorgeous vision". The other basic point was that he was the one speaker who did not consciously or unconsciously magnify his own religion and the spiritual ideas they contained and also talked of the shortcomings in their practical application. He had a great respect for other peoples' religions too. These aspects gave a punch to his talk and added a sincerity which could appeal straight to the heart as from a man to man, apart from its philosophic content or theoloigcal jargon. We know of the tremendous impact that Vivekananda created when he addressed the audience in the Parliament of Religions as "Sisters and Brothers of America". We are told that when Vivekananda spoke thus, there arose a peal of applause that lasted for several minutes. He was an orator by divine right.⁵ Among the many tributes paid to Swami Vivekananda on this occasion, one that deserves quoting and has been quoted more than once is that by the famous poetess Harriet Monroe, Editor of *Poetry*. She records in her autobiography: "But the handsome monk in the orange robe gave us in perfect English a masterpiece. His personality, dominant magnetic; his voice, rich as a bronze-bell; the controlled fervour of his feelings; the beauty of his message to the Western World he was facing for the first time—these combined to give us a rare and perfect moment of supreme emotion. It was human eloquence at its highest pitch".⁶ Even if there is an over-statement in it, this sums up Vivekananda the orator. The effect on the common men and women of America is melodramatically described in a poem entitled *Aunt Hannah on the Parliament of Religions*.

I quote it as it is reproduced:—

Then I heered th' han'some Hindu Monk, drest up in orange dress,
Who sed that all humanity was part of God—no less,

An' he said we was *not* sinners, so I comfort took, once more,

While the Parl'ment of Religion roared with approving roar.⁷

Bepin Chandra Pal's testimony is quoted in the *Life* of Swamiji by his Eastern and Western disciples to point out the total effect of Vivekananda's work in England and his lectures there.

It runs as follows:

"Some people in India think that very little fruit has come of the lectures that Swami Vivekananda delivered in England, and that his friends and admirers exaggerate his work. But on coming here I see that he has exerted a marked influence everywhere. In many parts of England I have met with men who deeply regard and venerate Vivekananda. Though I do not belong to his sect, and though it is true that I have difference of opinion with him, I must say that Vivekananda has opened the eyes of a great many here and broadened their hearts. Owing to his teaching most people here now believe firmly that wonderful spiritual truths lie hidden in the ancient Hindu scriptures. Not only has he brought about this feeling, but he has succeeded in establishing a golden relation between England and India. From what I quoted on 'Vivekanandism' from *The Dead Pulpit* by Mr. Howeis, you have clearly understood that, owing to the spread of Vivekananda's doctrines, many hundreds of people have seceded from Christianity".⁸ One great illustration of his eloquence is quoted in Vol. II of the *Life*. It referred to Calcutta's welcome at the Sovabazar Rajbati. The address was presented in a silver casket to the Swamiji who replied in a speech "that has become famous as a masterpiece of oratory and of fervent patriotism. This brought his recognition in an especial sense, as the Prophet of Modern India. He had defined in a new form the whole scope of Indian consciousness and had given birth to entirely new ideas of national and public life. The spirit of this lecture and of the Swamiji himself, made the profoundest impression, which has widened and deepened with the years, producing a New Order in modern India".⁹

He also excelled in small group meetings or parlour parleys. Sister Nivedita gives a pen picture of one such meeting in London in a West End drawing room, and Sister Christine describes another at the Thousand Island Park.

His second visit to America has been fully described in the life story which his disciples had written and we realise again and again the tremendous effect of his lectures and sermons, not only their grand variety but their deep penetration and pervasive influence. The magazine *Unity* is quoted describing his work in Los Angeles and it speaks as follows: "There is combined in the Swami Vivekananda, the learning of a University President, the dignity of an Archbishop, with the grace and winsomeness of a free and natural child. Getting upon the platform without a moment's preparation he would soon be in the midst of his subject, sometimes becoming almost tragic as his mind would wander from deep metaphysics to the prevailing conditions in Christian countries of today, whose people go and seek to reform the Filipinos with the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other". . .¹⁰

The *Washington Post* of Oct. 29, 1894 (quoted by Marie Louise Burke) wrote these significant lines:—"A Hindoo who is a member of no religious sect, who claims no knowledge of powers of occultism, who is not a believer in the miracles of yogis, who never saw the Dalai Lama and who does not think any more of him or of the other wonder-workers of India than he does of the other Christian Missionaries who are working on the outskirts of masses there, but who simply announces himself as a religious student and a teacher to world at large is something of a rarity".¹¹ His Cambridge classes, his lectures at Brooklyn Ethical and other associations, his replies to Ramabai circles were actuated by two objectives, first, to find a practical answer to the many problems: secondly, to preach a gospel of help, a gospel of social raising up and a gospel of equality. To him religion was life and not mere thought. It had to be lived. Heaven was nearer through football. Prof. Ernest P. Harrowitz sums it up:

I have no temple and no creed
I celebrate no mystic rite
The human heart is all I need for
I have found God ever there.
Love is the one sufficient creed and
Comradeship is purest prayer.¹²

In order to appreciate Swami Vivekananda as a writer, it has to be understood that his published writings and speeches cover more than four thousand pages and deal with subjects as varied and vast as they could be,—from Vedantic heights to a nationalistic creed, from *Raja Yoga* to cradle tales. They are mainly in English but there are some in Bengali and a few in Sanskrit also. Moreover besides his original Bengali writings, noted for their vigour, sincerity and literary skill, most of his English writings have been translated without the loss of the essential fire and faith of the originals. They may be subdivided into—

(a) Lectures ; (b) Discourses and interviews ; (c) Questions and answers ; (d) Inspired talks and conversations ; (e) Miscellaneous writings and articles, including mythological stories and biographies ; (f) Letters and (g) Poems.

It is said that there are certain difficulties to study Vivekananda from a purely artistic or literary point of view. Most of his prose writings are with a purpose and they are mainly vehicles for the propaganda of his great mission in life. Any estimate of Vivekananda as a litterateur will be incomplete if we do not draw attention to the fact that in addition to being a lecturer and an essayist on highly philosophical and moral topics he was also a story-teller, a parable-writer and a poet of no mean order. They opened up vistas of literary promise, which, if persisted, might have given the world a literary giant. Vivekananda's writings get permanent literary value because of their intrinsic quality, lucidity of thought, nobility of diction and for the inspiration they give and the aspiration they create.

The ultimate value of a literature is not to be measured merely by what a poet or a novelist says or portrays or by the imageries he weaves but by what he helps others to become, not only in the moral or idealistic sense as a preacher or teacher but by creation of symbols. 'All true literature is symbolic', says Abercrombie. This is particularly true of Vivekananda's poems. As has been said, poetry, even when it is dominated by intellectual tendency and motive, cannot really live and work by intellect alone ; it is not created nor wholly shaped by reason or judgment, but is an intuitive seeing and inspired hearing.

Formative influences on Vivekananda as a writer may be summed up as :

- (1) His vast erudition in English and Sanskrit literature in an age of cultural impact from the West when new wine was being poured into old bottles and old moorings were in danger of being snapped.
- (2) His emotional abandon tempered by a great faith and a dedication to the higher values of life without being cribbed, cabined and confined by narrow limits of caste, creed, colour or convention.
- (3) His intensive sense of a burning nationalism which made him say "The soil of India is my highest heaven".

The *Karma-Yoga*, *Raja-Yoga*, *Jnana-Yoga* and *Bhakti-Yoga* may be termed as Swamiji's four outstanding contributions to philosophical literature along with the Harvard address on *Vedanta Philosophy*.¹³ They show such a depth of understanding and mode of presentation in simple understandable language that they rank as classics and would have brought him name and fame in this line alone. The themes such as the *Sages of India*, *Christ the Messenger*, the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, of Sita and Savitri, of the boy Gopala, of his great *Guru*, of Pavhari Baba or of Vilvamangal were told with a clarity that was appealing. I quote below a simple parable with his pungent dig at evolutionists and bacteriologists.

"A frog lived in a well. It had lived there for a long time. It was born there and brought up there, and yet was a little, small frog. Of course the evolutionists were not there then to tell us whether the frog lost its eyes or not, but for our story's sake, we must take it for granted that it had its eyes, and that it every day cleansed the water of all the worms and bacilli that lived in it with an energy that would do credit to our modern bacteriologists. In this way it went on and became a little sleek and fat. Well, one day another frog that lived in the sea came and fell into the well.

"Where are you from?"

"I am from the sea".

"The Sea! How big is that? Is it as big as my well?"

and he took a leap from one side of the well to the other.

"My friend", said the frog of the sea, "how do you compare the sea with your little well?"

Then the frog took another leap and asked, "Is your sea so big?"

"What nonsense you speak, to compare the sea with your well!"

"Well, then", said the frog of the well, "nothing can be bigger than my well; there can be nothing bigger than this; this fellow is a liar, so turn him out".¹⁴

Vivekananda's letters are also worth quoting as specimens of literary excellence and constitute by themselves not only a chapter of his unconscious literary bias but as great human documents of permanent value. I need only refer to a few; one has only to read his letters, say, to Hale Sisters or to Miss McLeod. I quote one which in pathos, sincerity, depth and love is one of the best specimens: "I have bundled my things and am waiting for the deliverer. Shiva, Shiva, carry my boat to the other shore". . . "After all, Joe, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature; works, activities, doing good and so forth are all superimpositions. Now I again hear his voice; the same old voice thrilling my soul . . . Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst of power. Now they are vanishing and I drift—I come Mother . . . a spectator, no more an actor".¹⁵ In a letter to Swami Brahmananda in 1894 he wrote: "Neither money pays nor name nor fame, nor learning, it is character that can cleave through adamant walls of difficulties".¹⁶ He was a great letter-writer. His epistles are specimens of a giant force latent in sparkling words and act like electric shocks. A short letter from Ridgeley in 1899 is a shining example:

"Life is a series of fights and disillusionments . . . The secret of life is not enjoyment but education through experience".

Again his sayings and utterances are mines of literary gems, apart from their depth of philosophic content. A few examples may be given:

"Give up the burden of all deeds to the Lord. Give all, both good and bad. Do not keep the good and give only the bad. God helps those who do *not* help themselves".¹⁷—"the first angle of the triangle of love is that love

knows no bargaining—the Love, the Lover and the beloved are one”¹⁸. . . “Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within . . . This is the whole of religion. Doctrines and dogmas or rituals or books or temples or forms are but secondary details”. . .¹⁹

The Problem of Modern India and its Solution—the first Bengali article written by Swami Vivekananda as an introduction to the *Udbodhana*, 1899, —*Ramakrishna, His life and sayings*, *The Paris Congress of the History of Religions, Knowledge—its Source and Acquirement*, *Modern India, Our Present Social Problem*, *The Education that India Needs* are a few among many of his prose writings which have a literary flair and are models of literary essays which have a permanent value.

His original writings in Bengali deserve particular mention. These are *Parivrajaka** (Wanderer), *Prachya O Paschatya* (The East and The West), *Bhabbar Katha** (Thoughts for the Moment), *Patravali* (Letters), *Veera Vani* (Heroic sayings) etc.

He knew that no artificial language could ever have that force, that brevity, that expressiveness or admit of being given any turn you please, as the spoken language. “Language must be made like pure steel—turn and twist it any way you like, it is again the same—it cleaves a rock in twain at one stroke, without its edge being turned”.²⁰ On language his ideal was unequivocal—

• “Simplicity is the secret. My ideal of language is my Master’s language, most colloquial and yet most expressive. It must express the thought which is intended to be conveyed”.²¹

• “The Bengali language must be modelled not after the Sanskrit but rather after the Pali, which has a strong resemblance to it. In coining or translating technical terms in Bengali, one must however use all Sanskrit words for them, and an attempt should be made to coin new words. For this purpose if a collection is made from a Sanskrit dictionary of all these technical terms, then it will help greatly the constitution of the Bengali language”.²² In short Vivekananda pleaded that the style of writing should

* In the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, *Parivrajaka* and *Bhabbar Katha* have been rendered into English under the titles of *Memoirs of European Travel* and *Matter for Serious Thought* respectively. (Vide C. W., Vol. VII, p. 297 and Vol. VI, p. 193.)

be of the kind in which people speak and think. His *Bangabhasa* (Bengali language) was therefore colloquial. The book *Prachya O Paschatya* was a unique book which Rabindranath praised to Dinesh Sen unhesitatingly. This is mentioned by S. Kumud Banhdu Sen in the *Udbodhan* (Golden Jubilee Number). The poet asked him to read this book and find out how colloquial Bengali could appear as a living and forceful language.

The prose works of Swami Vivekananda are mainly dissertations, essays and lectures and replies to addresses. Among his original Bengali writings, the most remarkable are the *Parivrajaka* and *Prachya O Paschatya*, mentioned above. The beautiful language of his prose writings, both in English and Bengali, the deep pathos they invoke and the grand atmosphere they create really confer on them a literary excellence which is generally absent in such types of literature. The stories of Jada Bharata, of Prahlada, of Lord Buddha and of Christ, particularly his talk on *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas A' Kempis and his delineation of the epics of ancient India have permanent literary value also. How beautifully he describes the life of Pavhari Baba, or Vyasa's story of Savitri! In telling us of Christ the Messenger, he ends with the prophetic words: "Our salutations go to all the past Prophets, whose teachings and lives we have inherited, whatever might have been their race, clime or creed. Our salutations go to all those God-like men and women, who are working to help humanity, whatever be their birth, colour or race. Our salutations to those who are coming in the future,—living Gods—to work unselfishly for our descendants".²³

Now let us take Vivekananda the poet. His well-known poems in English are—*Kali the Mother*, *Six Stanzas of Nirvanashatkam*, *Hold on yet a While*, *Brave Heart*, *The Song of the Sannyasin*—*Om Tat Sat Om* and *Peace* or *To the Awakened India*.

There are also English translations of his Bengali poems such as (a) *The Hymn of Creation*, (b) *The Hymn of Samadhi*, (c) *A Hymn to the Divine Mother*, (d) *A Hymn to Shiva*, (e) *A Hymn to the Divinity of Sree Ramakrishna*, (f) *And Let Shyama Dance There* and (g) *A Song I Sing to Thee*.

One of his very first poems in English is the one which he "inflicted", to quote his own words, on Prof. Wright even before the Parliament meeting

at Chicago in 1893. It is not the best from the literary standpoint, but it contains some beautiful lines, e.g.

The moon's soft light, the stars so bright
 The glorious orb of day
 He shines in them His beauty might
 Reflected lights are they
 The majestic morn, the melting eve
 The boundless billowy sea
 In nature's beauty, songs of birds
 I see through them it is He.

Again take the one entitled *Peace* composed at Ridgeley Manor, New York, 1899, when he says

It is sweet rest in music ;
 And pause in sacred art ;
 The silence between speaking ;
 Between two fits of passion—
 It is the calm of heart.

The concept of peace as 'death between two lives' or as 'lull between two storms' raises a poetic imagery of a highly controversial philosophical content. Vivekananda's *Kali the Mother* vividly portrays the spirit of destruction as typified by the ancient concept of She, the Terrible, and to the poet who has realised this aspect of cosmic life, the following crisp and superb passage is a spontaneous expression—

For Terror is Thy name
 Death is in the Thy breath
 And every shaking step
 Destroys a world for e'er.
 Thou 'Time', the All-Destroyer!
 Come, O Mother, come!

Here is a complete picture of negation and the background is not only poetic but the prelude has been correctly painted:

The stars are blotted out,
 The clouds are covering clouds,
 It is darkness vibrant, sonant.

A million lunatics are let loose, mountain waves dash, the sky is pitchy dark. Sister Nivedita gives us a graphic picture of how he wrote this poem in a fever of inspiration. He had actually fallen on the floor when he had finished, exhausted with his own intensity. "The worship of the Terrible now became his whole cry".

Here it would be permissible to digress into a short discussion of what is the essence of poetry. It is not, as Sri Aurobindo correctly points out, an aesthetic pleasure of the imagination, the intellect and the ear, a sort of elevated pastime. It is not also a matter of faultlessly correct or at most an exquisite technique. True poetry is self-vision or world vision—it is the spiritual excitement of rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in the inner and outer worlds—

Breaking the silence of the seas

Among the farthest Hebrides—

as Wordsworth has it, or it is, in the words of Meredith,—

Seraphically free

From taint of personality.

Like the Vedic Agni, the poet is the youth, the Seer, the beloved and the immortal Guest with his honeyed tongue of ecstasy. He is Truth-Conscious, the Truth-Finder, and his poetry is born as a flame from earth, yet it is the heavenly messenger from the Immortals.

It would perhaps not be correct to say that "the religious poems of Swami Vivekananda and his defence in plea of a mystic mediaeval philosophy are the swan-songs of a dying culture vis-a-vis the resurgent modernized India".

It has also been commented that Swamiji's great poems *The Song of the Sannyasin* and *The Songs of the Free*, though excellent poetry by themselves, do not carry with them a universal appeal and their ideational (the term is borrowed from Sorokin) stimuli are mediaeval in tone, taste and tune. The criticism is that today the saving grace and the holy communion are not in *Om Tat Sat Om* but in a balanced life of dedicated work. It is forgotten that here the poet brings out no cult of personal salvation but speaks of the Divine in Man at its best.

Romain Rolland has devoted a considerable part of his discussion as to

how far the American spirit was impregnated by Indian thought before Vivekananda and how far, in his turn, Vivekananda did imbibe any of this reorientation from Emerson, Thoreau, William James, Walt Whitman, Maxmüller, Paul Deussen and others. It was true that in the West he discovered a nation of heroes, the true Kshatriyas, but the western sojourn did not have much influence on his literary ideals and expression either in style or in thought. Of course he was dreaming of the meeting of India and Europe (including America) and a rejuvenated spiritualised humanity. It was not medieval in character. The dynamism in his writings is not make-believe rationalism. Take even the theme in his poem written to the Rajah of Khetri in the style of the poet Longfellow—*Hold on Yet a While*—which reminds us of a working creed—

‘Not a work will be lost, no struggle vain,
Though hopes be blighted, powers gone;’

This leads to the epilogue—

‘Awake, arise, and dream no more!’

and its fitting caption was *The Worship of Man the God*.*

‘Him worship, the only visible,
Break all other idols.’

That was the Living God.

The symbol of *Daridra Narayan*, of the divinity of humanity and of humanity of divinity,—words which Tagore later used in his Hibbert Lectures in Oxford on the *Religion of Man*—thus came to be evolved. But there was a difference. Tagore’s imagery conceived of *Visva Manava* or the Universal Man, and not merely Man the poor, Man the afflicted, Man the Have-not. He, however, sufficiently echoed Vivekananda in saying: “The solitary enjoyment of the Infinite in meditation no longer satisfied me and the texts which I used for my silent worship lost their inspiration without my knowing it. I am sure I vaguely felt that my need was spiritual self-realization in the life of Man through some disinterested services”.²⁴ Rabindranath was also fond of *Siva* symbol and though he had dilated on the fatherhood of God his poetic genius had been attracted by the symbol of the ‘motherhood’ of woman. We do not get in Vivekananda any ‘love’

* The two lines that follow are from Swamiji’s poem *The Living God*. (C. W., Vol. VIII, p. 169.)

poem as we get in Rabindranath or in the Vaisnava poets or even in Sri Aurobindo whose beautiful delineation of the theme in Radha's prayer or Savitri or Ahana is superb. We remember that Swamiji told the Rama Bai circle in Brooklyn that the ideal woman was the wife in the West and the mother in the Orient. We have also to remember that vision is the characteristic power of the poet. A poet sees. He is a seer. A philosopher's essential gift is discriminative thought whereas a scientist has to depend on analytical observation.

We can unhesitatingly say that here is not only a great spiritual savant but also a good litterateur, who absorbs history, poetry, legend and tradition and weaves them in a composite whole. There is, however, one note of caution. Whatever one speaks or writes with a purpose is in a sense propagandist in character, and it is stated that true literature rarely flourishes unless there is spontaneity in it. We have in some of the poems and prose writings of Vivekananda that rare quality.

In Vol. IV of the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda published by the Advaita Ashram (1932 Edition) we come upon some translations of his Bengali and Sanskrit writings; the one on *Modern India*, a Bengali contribution to the *Udbodhana*, which ends with an invocation—'Make me a man'—is a remarkable exposition not merely for its outspoken strength, its evident sincerity, its patriotic tone, but also for its advanced socialistic views with a proletarian bias. The prophetic words were—'forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are your flesh and blood, your brothers.' The letter to Sarala Devi dated 24th April, 1897, on the education that India needs contains Swamiji's testament of faith and his Bengali poem, *Sakhar Prati (To a Friend)* sums up the position—

'Listen, friend, I will speak my heart to thee
I have found in my life this truth supreme.
Buffeted by waves, in this whirl of life,
There's one ferry that takes across the sea.
Formulas of worship, control of breath,
Science, philosophy, systems varied,
Relinquishment, possession and the like,

All these are but delusions of the mind—

Love, love—that's the one thing, the sole treasure'.

A Hymn to the Divine Mother and *A Hymn to Siva* are typical literary invocations of the Swamiji in Sanskrit. His powerful poem *And Let Shyama Dance There*, which is an English rendering of his Bengali poem *Nachuk Tahate Shyama*, gives a somewhat unique pen-picture of sweet and grim aspects of Nature alternated with telling effect which shows a literary artist's imageries at their best. The silver moon, a shower of sweet smile, murmuring rivers, rippling lakes, the maddening wine of love, the charm of sex, on the one hand, and on the other,

The roll of thunder, the crashing of clouds,

War of elements spreading earth and sky,

Darkness vomiting forth blinding darkness

give us a poet who is not a mere weaver of words but a genius who had realised the inner meaning of the cosmic dance of Nature in her most primeval and pristine glory,—a description almost akin in depth and poetic pathos to Sri Aurobinda's *Savitri*.

Vivekananda was not only an art critic but also an artist. He was a painter and a musician too. He was a singer of songs and people say he had a flair for playing indigenous drums. As a matter of fact his melodious songs, particularly his devotional ones, so profoundly affected Sri Ramakrishna that he used to fall in a trance. It may almost be said without contradiction that the outer symphony of music became a fruitful source of contact between the Master and the disciple leading to an inner harmony. Ramprasad's songs were his favourites and he would sing Sankaracharya's hymns with an emotional abandon that would enthral an audience.

That great book of reminiscences by Sri M. records many instances of Narendra singing at the Master's behest such songs as

"Oh Mother make me mad"

or

"Mother mine,

*In the depth of darkness, flashes your formless form".

By the eighties of the last century Rabindranath Tagore had established his reputation as a rising poet, singer and composer of songs. His devotional

songs had particularly gained fame even in that early age. It would not be wrong to assume that they were known to Vivekananda who was a genuine lover of music. We can visualise the young poet's soul-stirring songs being sung with a gusto by the still younger prophet to be. More than one instance is recorded.²⁵ We can almost picture the whole scene in its basic grandeur and sublime surrender, Narendra singing in his beautiful voice

"I have made Thee, O Lord, my life's loadstar"

and the Master slowly sinking into the infinite depths of the inner consciousness.

In Lahore he met Swami Ramtirtha. We are told by his disciples that at the dinner in his honour he sang *Jahan Ram Wuhan Kam nahin Jahan Kam nahin Ram*—where God is, there is work—where there is no work—there is no God. His melodious voice made the meaning of his song thrill the hearts of those present. Vivekananda's own view was that Indian music was developed to the full seven notes, even to half and quarter notes, ages ago. India led in music, also, in drama and sculpture.²⁶

Again he said: "There is science in Dhrupad, Kheyal etc., but it is *Kirtana* i.e. in *Mathura* and *Viraha* and other like compositions that there is real music for there is feeling. Feeling is the soul, the secret of everything. There is more music in common people's songs . . . The science of *Dhrupada* etc. applied to the music of *Kirtana* will produce the perfect music".²⁷ As O'Shaughnessy says, "We are the music-makers, And we are the dreamers of dreams".^{27a}

Sj. Bhupendranath Dutta's book on his patriot-prophet brother has a chapter on Vivekananda as an art critic.²⁸ We learn therefrom as well as from other evidences that he used to draw pictures in his boyhood with water-colours. He would paint, he would sing, and he had a knack also for acting. We read in his biography that in Poona he actually criticised Ravivarma's style of painting, at a time when the painter's fame was at its highest, for introducing a new technique.

Music, art and language were to him so many vehicles for reinterpreting Nature in its true spirit and not merely describing it in its outward expression or form. In between his other engagements he would find time to talk on secular subjects as Art and we find him talking at a farewell

reception in the hall of the "Royal Society of Painters in Water-colours". At Wendte Hall, San Francisco, his topic of discussion was *Arts and Sciences in India* and he explained the musical notations. Sister Nivedita who did so much for Indian Art was inspired by him. Swamiji's views on Art are very succinctly recorded as follows: ²⁹

"The secret of Greek Art is its imitation of nature even to the minutest details ; whereas the secret of the Indian Art is to represent the ideal. The energy of the Greek painter is spent in perhaps painting a piece of flesh and he is so successful that a dog is deluded into taking it to be a real bit of meat and so goes to bite it. Now, what glory is there in merely imitating nature? Why not place an actual bit of flesh before the dog? The Indian tendency, on the other hand, to represent the ideal, the super-sensual, has become degraded into painting grotesque images. Now true art can be compared to a lily which springs from the ground, and yet is quite high above it. So Art must be in touch with nature—and wherever that touch is gone, Art degenerates—yet it must be above nature. Art is—representing the beautiful".

"The difference between architecture and building is that the former expresses an idea, while the latter is merely a structure built on economical principles. The value of matter depends solely on its capacities of expressing ideas".

• Again he says, "In art, interest must be centred on the principal theme. Drama is the most difficult of all arts. In it two things are to be satisfied—first, the ears and second, the eyes. To paint a scene, if one thing be painted, it is easy enough ; but to paint different things and yet to keep up the central interest is very difficult. Another difficult thing is stage-management, that is, combining different things in such a manner as to keep the central interest intact".³⁰ Real music is a question of feeling. Feeling is the sole secret of everything.³¹

He declared in Paris, long before Havell and Coomarswamy, that the theory of Hellenic influence on Indian Art was a myth. To him an artistic representation was not mere colours, shade or light but an expression of some idea. He, however, admitted that too much absorption in the ideal often made Indian Hindu Art unreal in the shape of grotesque

or unnatural figures as compared to a Grecian statue or an Italian painting.

We learn from Rolland that Vivekananda, while returning from Europe in 1896, went to salute Da Vinci's *Last Supper* at Milan. He was at Rome for the feast of Christmas and on the Christmas eve he had seen the simple worship of the Bambino by the children. Infant Christ and the Virgin Mother greatly attracted him. Yet as Rolland points out, Vivekananda like Tolstoy rejected as dangerous the power of artistic emotion, particularly of music, over mind. It may be recalled that Tolstoy was an admirer of Vivekananda. In his learned *Dissertation on Painting* Mahendranath Dutta repeated his brother Vivekananda's maxim that a true artist should represent his own spirit, his dual self, through the medium of exterior objects i.e. separate the outer and inner layer of consciousness. In every art there is the *lila* (the play) and the *nitya* (the eternity). Rolland writes: "Vivekananda's own brother has filled in the lines indicated by the Master. I cannot urge European aesthetes too strongly to read his *Dissertation on Painting* (dedicated to the memory of Brahmananda, the first abbot of Ramakrishna Mission, with a preface by Abanindranath Tagore, 1922). The great Indian religious artist places himself face to face with the object he wishes to represent in the attitude of a *yogi* in search of truth; to him the object becomes the subject".³² Swamiji also inspired Nivedita as an art critic and she imbibed her Master's ideas. The great master artist Nandalal Bose was in his turn influenced by Nivedita and observed: "To the artists, the ideal of Swamiji acts like the backbone of the art, without which art becomes weak and lifeless. Swamiji's method of understanding aesthetic was through *Jnana* (knowledge), while the *Thakur* (Ramakrishna-deva) arrived at the realisation of knowledge through aesthetic. Both of them fully realized the aesthetic and knowledge, only the path of progress was different. Methinks, the path of *anubhava* (appreciation) of the *Thakur* is more suitable for the artists. The artists follow this way. The worshipper of *Rupa* (form) is an idolater, the worshipper of knowledge is a believer of incorporeal being . . . Havell, Abanindranath, Okakura (Japanese artist and art critic), Jagadish Bose etc. all used to discuss art with Sister Nivedita. All of them were inspired by the *ideal* of the Sister"³³ and she in

her turn was inspired by Vivekananda. The Sister had discussions with Rabindranath as well. It is stated by many critics that the *Gora* shows the biggest impact of Vivekananda on Rabindranath through Sister Nivedita. According to Brajendra Nath Seal there was a tinge of Bohemian temperament in Vivekananda's artist nature. Jamsetji Tata, on the other hand, wanted him to divert the ascetic spirit to the cultivation of sciences—natural and humanistic—and wanted his help in this work. That persons like Hiram Maxim, the cannon king, Sarah Bernhardt, the world-famous actress, Madame Calve, the great singer, should be attracted by him show what a colourful personality Vivekananda was. He had inherited from his Master a living experience, not a bias for an Oriental Christ or merely a lead for Veda-Vedanta Puranic version of the old school or an eclectic formula of Buddha, Christ, Sankara or Chaitanya, but the age-old adage that God was in everything and everything was in God not merely as a dictum but as a grand synthetic realisation. "Wherever there is any love it is He, the Lord is present there. Where the husband kisses the wife, He is there in the kiss; where the mother kisses the child, He is there in the kiss; and where friends clasp hands, He, the Lord is present . . ." ³⁴ We may use Rolland's expression—The angelic Master had instinctively resolved all the dissonances of life into a Mozartian harmony, as rich and sweet as the Music of the spheres.

As an orator, as a writer, and as an art-critic, Vivekananda still inspires us with his burning faith and even sixty years after his passing away we prize this as his great contribution, the great realisation—

"Man is not yet. He will have to be"—And that is the Message.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: HIS CONTRIBUTION TO BENGALI LITERATURE

A great literature comes out of a great life in as much as a great life becomes the emotional centre of a country's literature. This can be proved from the lives of Buddha, Christ, Sankaracharya or Sri Chaitanya. The first two never attempted anything in prose or rhyme, but we know what a great literature has been built up around their lives and teachings.

The *Sikhsastaka* of Sri Chaitanya is surely a masterpiece of devotional literature. Yet the Vaishnava literature of medieval Bengal is more influenced by his life than by his writings.

Sankaracharya is one of the greatest intellectuals of India, and the greatest commentator on the Vedanta. There are numerous religious poems attributed to Sankaracharya, though some may not accept the authenticity of all these poems. We find a wonderful harmony of intellect and emotion, which has immortalised these poems. Swamiji was inspired both by Sankara's philosophy and his poems.

Swami Vivekananda was a great admirer of all these saints. But his literary genius was more influenced by Sankaracharya's lofty and charming style, and above all by the Upanishads. As we know, his ideal was "Sankara's intellect and Buddha's heart". If we are allowed to add the devotion of Sri Chaitanya to this, we can easily find out why he thought Sri Ramakrishna to be the most perfect incarnation of God [অবতারবরিস্ত]. Curiously enough, Sri Ramakrishna became not only his spiritual teacher, but influenced his literary ideal as well. From his college-days he marked with great wonder and admiration how Sri Ramakrishna could express the highest spiritual knowledge in the most simple colloquial style. He then compared his Master with Buddha, Christ and Sri Chaitanya, who preached in the language of the common people. He knew in his heart that this was the way to make the Truth universal and also the way to energize the language, which to become great, needs the inspiration of great thoughts and ideas.

That was why while starting the Bengali fortnightly Udbodhan* in 1899, Swami Vivekananda became the most ardent supporter of the spoken language or *Chalita Bhasa* as the vehicle of literary style. In this respect Vivekananda was the forerunner of the movement started in later years by Tagore and Pramatha Nath Choudhury in favour of spoken language in their monthly *Sabuj Patra* (1914). But like his predecessor Bankimchandra, the foremost writer of Bengali prose in the 19th century, Vivekananda had respect also for *Sadhu Bhasa* or the classical prose which derived its inspiration from Sanskrit. Although most of the Bengali writings of Swamiji are colloquial, still one-third of them is in the classical style. In both the forms we find his literary genius.

Sister Nivedita in her introduction to the first edition of the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda noted the chief factors which formed his intellectual background—"the formative influence that went to the determining of his vision may perhaps be regarded as threefold. There was, first, his literary education in Sanskrit and English. The contrast between the worlds thus open to him carried with it a strong impression of that particular experience which formed the theme of the Indian sacred books." A few lines later Sister Nivedita points to the 'trinity', which are "the three notes that mingle themselves to form the music of the works of Vivekananda"—they are "the Shastras, the Guru, and the Mother land."

As to the extent of Swamiji's knowledge of literature we must remember that along with his knowledge of Sanskrit and English, he was well acquainted with the literature in his own mother tongue. He was well-read both in medieval and modern Bengali literature. His healthy literary taste recognised Kavikankan Mukundaram (16th century) and Michael Madhusudan Datta (19th century) as the greatest poets of Bengal. He was also a great admirer of Vaishnava lyrics, though he cautioned us against the over-sentimentality of the Vaishnava School. His fiery imagination found in *Kali*, the Goddess of death and destruction, of fearlessness and benediction the fullest expression of Truth.

In a way he belonged to the *Shakta* School of poets, who took up the challenge of sorrow and death, in order to realise the Truth behind the veil

* Later 'Udbodhan' became a monthly journal (1314 B.S.).

of *Maya*. Poets like Ramprasad, Kamalakanta etc. who were forerunners of Sri Ramakrishna, are also the forerunners of Vivekananda's conception of Kali. In this respect also it was his Guru Sri Ramakrishna, who made him realise that God is both with form and without form, and the best way to serve God is not to seek for one's own salvation, but to know and serve God in all around us.

In the literary tradition of Bengal the quest of the soul from personal to divine love and from *Kali* to *Brahma* is not a far cry. In the Bengali poems of Vivekananda, *Sakhar Prati* (To a Friend) and *Nachuk Tahate Shyama* (Let Shyama Dance There), we find the quest of the soul for the highest truth as well as its love and agony in this mortal sphere. In both the poems we find that the central theme is *Kali the Mother*. These poems are special treasures in the *Shakta* School of poetry. The *Shakta Padavali* or *Shakta* lyrical songs started from the middle of the 18th century and has found its fulfilment in Vivekananda's poems.

In *Sakhar Prati*,¹ the Supreme Being *Kali* is described as

হয়ে বাক্য-মন-অগোচর, স্বেচ্ছ-দৃষ্টিতে তিনি অধিষ্ঠান,
মহাশক্তি কালী মৃত্যুরূপা, মাতৃভাবে তাঁর আগমন।*

The poem begins with the realisation of the utter vanity and self-contradiction of this world, but as it proceeds we feel the deep emotional tumult through which Vivekananda had to pass, to attain the greater truth of life—

শোন বলি মরমের কথা, জেনেছি জীবনে সত্য সার—
তরঙ্গ আকুল ভবঘোর, এক তরী করে পারাপার—
মন্ত্র তন্ত্র প্রাণ-নিয়মন, মতামত, দর্শন-বিজ্ঞান,
ত্যাগ-ভোগ-বুদ্ধির বিভ্রম; 'প্রেম' 'প্রেম'—এই মাত্র ধন।

... ..

'দেব' 'দেব'—বল আর কেবা? কেবা বল সবারে চালায়?
পুত্র তরে মায়ে দেয় প্রাণ, দস্যু হরে—প্রেমের প্রেরণ!!!†

* "All powerful, Death Herself, remaining ever beyond speech and mind, dwelling alike in pleasure and pain."

† Listen, friend, I will speak my heart to thee,
I have found in my life this truth supreme,—
Buffeted by waves, in this whirl of life,
There's one ferry that takes across the sea,—

Wandering through various paths of life Vivekananda at last realised that there is no way to escape except through Love.

And this Love unfolded before him that great vision—

বহুদূরপে সম্মুখে তোমার, ছাড়ি কোথা খুঁজিছ ঈশ্বর?
জীবের প্রেম করে যেই জন, সেই জন সেবিছে ঈশ্বর।*

The last two lines of the poem have become two of the most oft-quoted lines of Bengali literature. Vivekananda has reached Upanishadic heights in these lines.

The *Upanishad* was to him the highest form of poetic expression—"apart from all its (Upanishad's) merits as the greatest philosophy, apart from its wonderful merit as theology, as showing the path of salvation to mankind, the Upanishadic literature is the most wonderful painting of sublimity that the world has." Vivekananda has compared this 'painting of sublimity' with those of the western poets; and showed that although there are some wonderfully sublime passages in the poems of Milton, Dante, Homer etc., still there is always the 'grasping for the senses'. In comparison to their language, the language of the Upanishads is almost negative, . . . "sometimes taking you beyond the senses, pointing out to you something which you cannot grasp, which you cannot sense, and at the same time you feel certain that it is there. What passage in the world can compare with this?"

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं
नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ॥†

Formulas of worship, control of breath,
Science, philosophy, systems varied,
All these are but delusions of the mind;—
Love, Love, that's the one thing, the sole treasure.

Say, who else is the highest God of gods?
Say, who else moves all the universe?
The mother dies for young, robber robs!
Both are but the impulse of the same Love!
* These are His manifold forms before thee,
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?

He is indeed serving God
Who loves all beings,

† There the sun cannot illumine, nor the moon, nor the stars, the flash of lightning cannot illumine the place, what to speak of this mortal fire."

Vivekananda followed this ideal of expression in his immortal songs:

নাহি সূর্য, নাহি জ্যোতিঃ, নাহি শশাঙ্ক সন্দর,
ভাসে ব্যোমে ছায়াসম ছবি বিশ্ব চরাচর॥
অক্ষুট মন-আকাশে, জগতসংসার ভাসে,
ওঠে ভাসে ডোবে পদঃ অহং-স্রোতে নিরন্তর॥
ধীরে ধীরে ছায়াদল, মহালয়ে প্রবেশিল,
বহে মাত্র 'আমি' 'আমি'—এই ধারা অনুক্ষণ॥
সে ধারাও বন্ধ হ'ল, শূন্যে শূন্য মিলাইল,
'অবাঙ্ মনসোগোচরম্', বোঝে—প্রাণ বোঝে যার॥*

Except in one or two Buddhist *Charya* songs of the earliest period of Bengali literature, there is no other comparable instance in Bengali Poetry, where the poet has been able to express the highest flight of the soul, which is known as the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* in Indian Philosophy. There is a counterpart of this poem where the theory of creation according to Vedanta Philosophy, is expressed⁴—

একরূপ, অ-রূপ-নাম-বরণ, অতীত-আগামি-কাল-হীন,
দেশহীন, সর্বহীন, 'নেতি নেতি' বিরাম যথায়॥

Here, Vivekananda describes how from the limitless ocean of the Supreme Will the whole of creation emerges. At the end of this song, Vivekananda concluded that this whole creation comes from Him, as the ray from Sun; but it is also true that the Creator and the created are the same, as are the Sun and its ray—

সেই সূর্য, তারি কিরণ; যেই সূর্য, সেই কিরণ।

Both these songs are treasures of Bengali literature. In them we have the proof of Sri Ramakrishna's blessings, that Naren would have the fullest realisation, coming true.

* Lo! The sun is not, nor the comely moon,
All light extinct: in the great void of space
Floats shadow-like the image-universe.
In the void of mind involute, there floats
The fleeting universe, rises and floats,
Sinks again, ceaseless, in the current "I".
Slowly, slowly, the shadow-multitude
Entered the primal womb, and flowed ceaseless,
The only current, the "I am," "I am".
Lo! 'Tis stopped, ev'n that current flows no more,
Void merged into void,—beyond speech and mind!
Whose heart understands, he verily does.

Sri Ramakrishna moulded his disciple's life and character with a view to the spiritual wellbeing of the whole of mankind. In a way Sri Ramakrishna is to Vivekananda both personal God and impersonal Truth. In a beautiful lyric *Gai Geet Shunate Tomay* (A Song I Sing To Thee)⁶ Vivekananda has mingled these two aspects of Ramakrishna's influence on him.

Vivekananda's style of Bengali poetry is influenced by the blank verse of Michael Madhusudan Datta, who was a follower of Milton in this respect. Swamiji was a great admirer of both Milton and Madhusudan.

In the poem *A Song I Sing To Thee*, he has followed the metre used by Girish Chandra Ghosh, the great poet and dramatist of Bengal, who moulded the blank verse in a new way. This new metre is called Gairish metre, after the name of Girish Chandra.

Vivekananda was not much in favour of rhyming. But his metre is always flawless. It is obvious that if he had written a few more poems in Bengali, his name would have been established as one of the major poets of Bengali literature. Although his output is very small, he has a distinct voice of his own, which can never go unheard.

It is interesting to note that after five years of Vivekananda's demise an article was published in the new edition of the famous magazine *Bangadarsan*,* which was then being edited by Rabindra nath Tagore. Its name is কবিতা সম্বন্ধে দ্বা'চারটি কথা (*A few Words about Poetry*) and the writer was Akshay Kumar Chattopadhyay. In it the writer made a comparative study of Tagore and Vivekananda, which is in many ways unique in the field of Bengali literature.

The writer observed that a complete view of life must comprise both joy and sorrow. Tagore has known the eternal truth through enjoyment of the beautiful in Nature. But Nature is terrible also. Tagore has tried to avoid the Terrible in her. Comparing the poems of Vivekananda with those of Tagore, the writer made these concluding remarks—“রবীন্দ্রনাথের শেষ উপলব্ধি—যাঁহার আনন্দধারা অনন্ত সৌন্দর্যের ভিতর দিয়া আসিয়া উপাসকের হৃদয়ে ভিত্তিরূপে ফুটিয়া উঠে;—বিবেকানন্দের উপলব্ধি—যাঁহার আনন্দধারা বিশ্বের অনন্ত শোণিতরাঙা সত্যবেদনার ভিতর

* *Bangadarsan*: *Nava Paryaya*: 7th year: *Jyaishta* Number, 1314 B.S. This magazine was started by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay from Vaisākḥ of 1279 B.S. (1872).

দিয়া আসিয়া যদ্যুমান বীরের আপনাতে আপনি পূর্ণ বিরাট হৃদয়ে যন্ত্রণাপীড়িত জীবের প্রতি প্রেমরূপে ফুটিয়া উঠে”।*

Sri Chattopadhyay based his proposition mainly on Swamiji's poem *Nachuk Tahate Shyama*⁷ (Let Shyama Dance There). In this poem Swamiji starts with depicting the two aspects of life—one which is beautiful, tender and attractive, another which is terrible, merciless and repulsive. In Indian literature we find these two aspects, in the conception of the Krishna of Vrindavan, and the Kali of the cremation ground. Vivekananda's heroic nature preferred Kali to the Krishna of Vrindavan—

সত্য তুমি মৃত্যুরূপা কালী, সদ্বিবনমালী তোমার মায়ার ছায়া।

করালিন, কর মর্মচ্ছেদ, হোক মায়াভেদ, সদ্বিবস্বপ্ন দেহে দয়া॥†

We can here remember Vivekananda's remark recorded by Nivedita in *The Master As I Saw Him*—“How few have dared to worship Death, or Kali! Let us worship Death. Let us embrace the terrible, because it is terrible ; not asking it to be toned down. Let us take misery, for misery's own sake”. And we feel that “this is not the coward's love of death, not the love of the weak, or the suicide. It is the welcome of the strong man, who has sounded every thing to its depths, and knows there is no alternative. . . .”

In that case one must fight always and fight on, even though always in defeat. In the concluding lines of the poem Vivekananda's clarion call to the human soul is—

জাগো বীর, ঘুচায়ে স্বপন, শিয়রে শমন, ভয় কি তোমার সাজে ?

দুঃখভার, এ ভব-ঈশ্বর, মন্দির তাহার প্রেতভূমি চিতামাঝে॥

পূজা তাঁর সংগ্রাম অপার, সদা পরাজয়, তাহা না ডরাক তোমা।

চূর্ণ হোক স্বার্থ সাধ মান, হৃদয় শ্মশান, নাচুক তাহাতে শ্যামা॥‡

* “The last conclusion of Tagore is that—It is His bliss that pours itself out through the infinite beauty of the universe and expresses itself as devotion in the worshipper's heart. Vivekananda's realisation is—It is His bliss that comes through the endless positive pain of the world and is transformed into Love in the great heart of the hero.”

† Thou dreaded Kali, the All-destroyer,
Thou alone art True ; Thy shadow's shadow
Is indeed the pleasant Vanamali.

O Terrible Mother, cut quick the core,
Illusion dispel—the dream of happiness,
Rend asunder the fondness for the flesh.*

‡ Awake, O hero! Shake off thy vain dreams,
Death stands at thy head—does fear become thee?

We should remember here that in his other lectures and writings Vivekananda has praised the Vrindavana episode of Krishna's life as the highest expression of divine love, although for the common people he preferred the fighting attitude of Sri Krishna of Kurukshetra and his immortal *Bhagavad Gita*.

As regards the comparison by Sri Chattopadhyay between Tagore and Swamiji, we should remember that Tagore in his later works came to recognise the Terrible side of Nature. Particularly we can find this darker aspect of Nature in his drawings in the last years of life. In his poems, also, from the period of *Balaka*, (बलाका) we find that Tagore has gradually become more and more conscious of the hard reality of this life and this world. In his famous poem *Prithivi* (पृथिवी) in *Patraput* (पत्रपुटे) we find those two aspects of life,—the beautiful and the terrible, depicted with deepest understanding. Yet on the whole Tagore's world of imagination is more concerned with beauty, serenity and bliss. His vision is '*Anandarupam amritam yat bibhati*'.* The Dakshin (benign) side of Rudra's (Shiva's) face was for him to worship, while Vivekananda preferred the *Vama* (terrible) side.†

Vivekananda's contributions towards Bengali prose were all published in the *Udbodhan*. Later they were collected in four books—1. *Bhabbar Katha* (Matter for Thought): a collection of Vivekananda's essays and a bunch of humorous and satirical stories; 2. *Parivrajaka* (Memoirs of European Travel); 3. *Prachya O Paschatya* (The East and the West); 4. *Vartaman Bharata* (Modern India). To these we must add his collection of letters in Bengali. One who is acquainted with Vivekananda's works knows that the man Vivekananda with a manifold personality has left his

.. .. . unending battle—
That verily is His sacred worship;
Constant defeat—let that not unnerve thee;
Shattered be little self, hope, name and fame;
Set up a pyre of them, and make thy heart
A burning ground.
And let Shyama dance there.º

* 'आनन्दरूपममृतम् यदि भाति'

† *Rudra yatthe dakshinam mukham tena mam pahi nityam*
svetāśvataropanisad: p. 21.

best impression in his letters both in English and Bengali. His Bengali letters are interesting from the point of view of Bengali literature and language. They are the best proofs of the triumph of colloquial over classical Bengali prose. It must be remembered that along with Pearychand Mitra and Kaliprasanna Singha, who wrote under the pseudonyms of Tekchand Thakur and Hutom Pencha respectively, Swami Vivekananda can rightly be called one of the architects of modern Bengali prose, which is based on colloquial Bengali.

Both *Parivrajaka* and *Prachya O Paschatya* are written in colloquial Bengali. Bengali Language is indebted to Vivekananda for his fine blending of the deepest emotion, the highest intellect and the finest sense of humour, in these two books. While describing the beauty of Bengal, the poet in him was inspired and one of the masterpieces of Bengali prose came out—“এই অনন্তশস্যশ্যামলা সহস্রস্রোতস্বতীমাল্যধারিণী বাঙলা দেশের একটি রূপ আছে। সে রূপ—কিছু আছে মালয়ালমে, আর কিছু কশ্মীরে। জলে কি আর রূপ নাই? জলে জলময়, মৃদল-ধারে বৃষ্টি কচুর পাতার উপর দিয়ে গড়িয়ে যাচ্ছে, রাশি রাশি তাল-নারিকেল-খেজুরের মাথা একটু অবনত হয়ে সে ধারাসম্পাত বইছে, চারিদিকে ভেকের ঘর্ষর আওয়াজ, এতে কি রূপ নাই? আর আমাদের গঙ্গার কিনার—বিদেশ থেকে না এলে, ডায়মন্ড হারবারের মূখ দিয়ে না গঙ্গায় প্রবেশ করলে সে বোঝা যায় না। সে নীল নীল আকাশ, তার কোলে কালো মেঘ, তার কোলে সাদাটে মেঘ, সোনালী কিনারাদার, তার নীচে ঝোপ ঝোপ তাল-নারিকেল-খেজুরের মাথা বাতাসে যেন লক্ষ লক্ষ ছমরের মতো হেলছে, তার নীচে ফিকে ঘন ঈষৎ পীতভ, একটু কালো মেশানো—ইত্যাদি হরেক রকমের সবুজের কাঁড়ি-ঢালা আঁব-নিচু-জাম-কাঁটাল—পাতাই পাতা—গাছ ডালপালা আর দেখা যাচ্ছে না, আশেপাশে ঝাড় ঝাড় বাঁশ হেলছে দুলছে, আর সকলের নীচে—যার কাছে ইয়ারকান্দি ইরাণী তুর্কিস্তানি গালচে দুলচে কোথায় হার মেনে যায়! সেই ঘাস, যতদূর চাও—সেই শ্যাম-শ্যাম ঘাস, কে যেন ছেঁটেছে টিক ক’রে রেখেছে; জলের কিনারা পর্যন্ত সেই ঘাস; গঙ্গার মৃদু-মন্দ হিজলো যে অবধি ঢেকেছে, যে অবধি অল্প অল্প লীলাময় ধাক্কা দিচ্ছে, সে অবধি ঘাসে আঁটা।”*

* There is also a special beauty in our Bengal, covered with endless verdant stretches of grass, and bearing as garlands a thousand rivers and streams. A little of this beauty one finds in Malabar and also in Kashmir. Is there not beauty in water? When there is water everywhere, and heavy showers of rain are running down arum leaves, while clumps of cocoanut and date palms slightly bend their heads under that downpour, and there is the continuous croaking of frogs all round—is there no beauty in such a scene as this? And one cannot appreciate the beauty of the banks of our Ganges, unless one is returning from foreign countries and entering the river by its mouth at Diamond Harbour. That blue, blue sky, containing in its bosom black clouds, with golden-fringed whitish clouds below them, underneath which clumps of cocoanut and date palms toss their tufted heads like a thousand chowries and below them again is an assemblage of light deep, yellowish, slightly dark and other varieties of green massed together these being the mango, lichi, black-berry and jack-fruit trees with an exuberance of leaves and foliage that entirely hide the trunk, branches, and twigs—while, close by, clusters of bamboos—toss in the

Vivekananda knew that literature is not only for the learned few. Although every literature should maintain high intellectual standards, it should be written 'for the people'. With a sense of social reality he foresaw that the age of the workmen (*Sudra Yuga*) was coming near. He asked the upper classes of India to be aware of their immediate future and told them that unless they voluntarily serve the common people and become ready to 'abdicate' in their favour, the future of the upper classes was doomed.

আৰ্ঘ্য বাবাগণের জাঁকই কর, প্রাচীন ভারতের গৌরব ঘোষণা দিনরাতই কর, আর যতই কেন 'ডম্‌ম্‌ম্‌' বলে ডম্‌ফই কর, তোমরা উচ্চবর্ণেরা কি বেঁচে আছে? তোমরা হচ্চ দশ হাজার বছরের মর্মি!!...এ মায়ার সংসারে আসল প্রহেলিকা, আসল মরুমরীচিকা তোমরা—ভারতের উচ্চবর্ণেরা! তোমরা ভূতকাল—লঙ্‌ লঙ্‌ লিট্‌ সব একসঙ্গে।...তোমরা শূন্যে বিলীন হও, আর নতুন ভারত বেরুক। বেরুক লাঙল ধরে, চাষার কুটির ভেদ করে, জেলে মালা মূচি মেথরের বড়পিড়ির মধ্য হ'তে। বেরুক মন্দির দোকান থেকে, ভুনাওয়ালার উন্ননের পাশ থেকে। বেরুক কারখানা থেকে, হাট থেকে, বাজার থেকে। বেরুক ঝোড়জঙ্গল পাহাড় পর্বত থেকে।*

With the *Parivrajaka* (The Wanderer) we move through world history, which is described in this book in the simplest colloquial language, and with a broad sense of humour.

Gifted with a power of keen observation it was natural for him to make a comparative study of the East and the West, and this is the main theme of both *Parivrajaka* and *Prachya O Paschatya*.

In *Prachya O Paschatya** we have a comparison between Indian and

wind, and at the foot of all lies that grass, before whose soft and glossy surface the carpets of Yarkhand, Persia and Turkistan are almost as nothing—as far as the eye can reach that green, green grass looking as even as if some one had trimmed and pruned it, and stretching right down to the edge of the river as far down the banks as where the gentle waves of the Ganges have sub-merged and are pushing playfully against, the land is framed with green grass and just below this is the sacred water of the Ganges." (C.W., Vol. VII, 1958, pp. 303-304).

* However much you may parade your descent from Aryan ancestors and sing the glories of ancient India day and night, and however much you may be dancing in the pride of your birth, you the upper classes of India,—do you think you are alive? You are but mummies ten thousand years old! ... In this world of *Maya*, you are the real illusions, the mystery, the real mirage in the desert, You, the upper classes of India! You represent all the forms of Sanskrit past tense 'long' (লঙ্‌), 'lung' (লঙ্‌) 'lit' (লিট্‌), jumbled into one... You merge yourself in the void and disappear, and let new India rise in your place. Let her arise out of the peasant's cottage, grasping the plough, out of the hearths of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from the groves and forests, from hills and mountains."

* "How colloquial Bengali can appear as a living and forceful language you will realize after reading *Prachya O Paschatya*. Such ideas, such language, similarly such penetrating liberal

Western ways and ideals, beginning with the daily habits of both cultures and rising up to the aims of Indian Vedanta and Western Science. As we know, Vivekananda's conclusion was, "Art, science and religion are but three different ways of expressing a single truth."

From Rammohan Roy, the Nineteenth Century Bengal felt time and again the impact of conflict and harmony between the Indian and the Western cultures, but until Vivekananda came no one was sure about the future of the modern civilization. Vivekananda said with authority that both Indian and Western civilization must adapt each to the other and thus prepare the ground for a perfect and harmonious civilization. He knew that this time India is going to be the centre of world civilization—'এবার কেন্দ্র ভারতবর্ষ'. In fact he started writing a book, namely *India's Message to the World*, but due to his premature death the book was left unfinished. But we can have his philosophy of History in his Bengali booklet *Vartaman Bharata*.

In *Vartaman Bharata* Swamiji divides the socio-political history of India in four parts—1. The age of the priest (Brahmana); 2. The age of the Warrior (Kshatriya); 3. The age of the Merchant (Vaisya—the age of the British rule); 4. The age of the Workman (Sudra). History of India has been analysed by a master mind in this book from the Vedic period up to the age of the British rule, from the viewpoint of the relation between the rulers and the ruled. A student of Indian history is delighted to find in this book Swamiji's most modern outlook, i.e. the history of a nation is not only the record of its Kings and Emperors, but also of the common people. In this book the history of the common people has been stressed as the real subject matter of history.

From his study of Western civilization, Swamiji sensed that Socialism in some form or other is sure to come. Though he was not acquainted with the works of Karl Marx, still he rightly foresaw the age of the *Sudras* as inevitable and prepared the ground for socialistic thoughts in Bengali literature.

vision, and the ideal of synthesis between the East and the West this book contains is surprising to one." [Tagore's conversation with Dinesh Chandra Sen], pp. 293-4, *Swami Vivekananda—Patriot-Prophet* by Dr. B. N. Datta.

Following the classical style of *Bhashyas* and *Sutras* of Sanskrit literature, Vivekananda created in *Vartaman Bharata* a new style of Bengali prose, rich in Sanskrit vocabulary and devoid of too many verbs, as is usual in Bengali prose. He noted¹² that due to too many verbs in Bengali prose, it becomes rather weak. So he used adjectives instead of using so many verbs and succeeded in creating a bold, elegant and compressed style, which was original in its own way.

Making a comparative study of Indian and Western standards Swamiji warns us at the end of the book against the blind following of the Western culture. He calls his Indian brothers to remember their Indian heritage; and asks them not to copy but to assimilate what is best in other countries, and to remain firm on their own footing of Indian culture. His concluding remark in the *Vartaman Bharata* has become a unique example of Bengali Classical prose—হে ভারত, ভুলিও না—তোমার নারীজাতির আদর্শ সীতা, সাবিত্রী, দময়ন্তী; ভুলিও না—তোমার উপাস্য উমানাথ সর্বভাগী শঙ্কর; ভুলিও না তোমার বিবাহ, তোমার ধন, তোমার জীবন ইন্দ্রিয়সুখের—নিজের ব্যক্তিগত সুখের জন্য নহে; ভুলিও না—তুমি জন্ম হইতেই ‘মায়ের’ জন্য বলিপ্রদত্ত; ভুলিও না—তোমার সমাজ সে বিরাট মহামায়ার ছায়ামাত্র; ভুলিও না—নীচজাতি, মূর্খ, দরিদ্র, অস্ত্র, মদুচি, মেথর তোমার রক্ত, তোমার ভাই! হে বীর, সাহস অবলম্বন কর; সদর্পে বল—আমি ভারতবাসী, ভারতবাসী আমার ভাই। বল—মূর্খ ভারতবাসী, দরিদ্র ভারতবাসী, ব্রাহ্মণ ভারতবাসী, চণ্ডাল ভারতবাসী আমার ভাই; তুমিও কটিমাত্র বশ্রাবত হইয়া সদর্পে ডাকিয়া বল—ভারতবাসী আমার ভাই, ভারতবাসী আমার প্রাণ, ভারতের দেবদেবী আমার ঈশ্বর, ভারতের সমাজ আমার শিশুশয্যা, আমার যৌবনের উপবন, আমার বার্ষিকের বারণসী; বল ভাই—ভারতের মৃত্তিকা আমার স্বর্গ, ভারতের কল্যাণ আমার কল্যাণ; আর বল দিনরাত, ‘হে গৌরীনাথ, হে জগদম্বে, আমায় মনুষ্য দাও; মা, আমার দুর্বলতা কাপদ্রুত দূর কর, আমায় মানুষ কর’।*¹³

* O India! Forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti; forget not that the God thou worshipping is the great ascetic of ascetics the all-renouncing Shankara, the Lord of Uma; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim, “I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.” Say, “The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother! Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy loins, proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice, “The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God. India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age”. Say, brother, “The soil of India is my highest heaven,

In the collection of essays entitled *Bhabbar Katha* (*Matter for Thought*) we find examples of both classical and colloquial style. Special mention should be made of his famous letter written to the editor of the *Udbodhana*, which has since been printed as a separate article under the caption, *Bangla Bhasha* (Bengali Language). In it Swamiji pleads for the colloquial style, and asks the reader—"that language in which you contemplate the questions of philosophy and science and in which you discuss among yourselves, is not that the true vehicle in which to write philosophy and science?"

Three articles were written in classical prose—1. *Sri Ramakrishna O Tnahar Ukti* (*Sri Ramakrishna and His Sayings*); 2. *Vartaman Samasya* (*Problems of Modern India*) 3. *Jnanarjan* (*Knowledge: Its Source and Acquisition*). The first article was a review of the book of the great German Scholar Max Müller on Sri Ramakrishna's life and sayings. With the advent of Sri Ramakrishna a new era had dawned and Swami Vivekananda asked his country-men to shake off their inertia (*tamas*) and to combine the calmness (*sattva*) of the East with the energy (*rajas*) of the West. According to him, that was the mission of the *Udbodhana*.

In the article *Jnanarjana* Swamiji concluded that learning is not hereditary, nor is it a monopoly of any particular class. Given the proper atmosphere, a man from any stratum of society can become a rishi or a genius.

Vivekananda is one of the greatest humanists of the 19th century Bengal, in the glorious tradition of Rammohan Roy, Vidyasagar, Michael Madhusudan Datta, Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay. Although he derived influences from many others, the chief source of his inspiration was Sri Ramakrishna. But in spite of all influences, he had a distinct tone of his own, and his writings remind us of that profound observation, 'the style is the Man'. The greatness of his personality has illumined our literature and has shown him as one of the master writers of Bengali prose for all times to come.

the good of India is my good," and repeat and pray day and night, "O Thou Lord of Gauri, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me! O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and—Make me a Man!"

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*, 6th Impn., p. 179.
3. Swami Vivekananda, *Veeravani*, p. 29.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
8. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. IV, 7th Impn., p. 509.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 510.
10. Swami Vivekananda, *Parivrajaka*, 11th Edn., pp. 8-9.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Chakrabarti, Saratchandra, *Swami-Sishya-Samvad*, Pt. I, p. 180.
13. Swami Vivekananda, *Vartaman Bharat*, *Swami Vivekanader Bani O Rachana* : Vol. VI, p. 249 and *C.W.*, Vols. IV, 7th Impn., 479-480 for its English translation.
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SOME THOUGHTS ON SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AS ORATOR, WRITER AND POET

Swami Vivekananda was a complex personality with many facets and with many talents. His genius was such that whatever interested him, he substantially mastered. Although oratory, writing and poetry were subsidiary to his main interests they were yet important to him, and he achieved much in these fields. At the same time we should not expect to compare him with those who, at least in English, are considered the masters of these arts.

Those who are remembered as orators practised oratory as an art. They were polished professionals. Moreover, they often used their oratorical powers to advance their careers in politics or in the church. They are remembered not for oratory alone but also for their success in politics and in other fields. It would be a mistake to class Swami Vivekananda with such men. He had natural gifts as an orator which, combined with the unusual force of his personality, gave him great power as a speaker. But he did not practise oratory as an art, he did not study elocution nor did he have the slightest desire to build a career for himself.

Swami Vivekananda also had poetical gifts and, more important, the poetical vision. His poetry, though slight in volume, contains gems of rare value. It is better, however, not to compare him with other poets but simply to study his work on its own merits.

I. The Orator

It was as an orator that Swami Vivekananda first became famous, for the first speech he delivered at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago at once transformed him from an unknown monk to a celebrity. Later, he toured over a large part of the United States and wherever he went he attracted crowds and aroused much enthusiasm. Contemporaries spoke highly of him as a speaker. So far as his delivery, voice and effect on the audience are concerned we must rely on written accounts, newspaper articles and reminiscences.

A few noteworthy things have been recorded about his delivery. One was his habit of pacing back and forth across the platform as he spoke. More significant was the fact that he spoke without notes. One disciple has mentioned this, saying, "As a lecturer he was unique: never referring to notes, as most lecturers do; and though he repeated many discourses on request, they were never mere repetitions."¹

One may wonder from this as to how he always found fresh subject-matter for his lectures, especially on learning that in the first year after the Parliament of Religions he sometimes had to give 12 to 14 lectures a week. He did feel intellectually exhausted at times, but he was aided in a very strange way. "For instance, at dead of night he would hear a voice shouting at him the very thoughts which he was to speak on the morrow. Sometimes it would come as from a long distance, speaking to him down a great avenue, as it were; and then it would draw nearer and nearer. Or again it would be like someone delivering a lecture alongside of him, as he lay on his bed listening. At other times two voices would argue before him, discussing at great length subjects which he would find himself repeating on the following day upon the platform or in the pulpit. Sometimes these discussions involved ideas that he had never heard or thought of previously."²

It should be noted that Swami Vivekananda always gave a subjective interpretation to these events and refused to consider them in any way miraculous. He would say that they illustrated the powers of the Self.

A few quotations from the contemporary accounts³ will give us some idea of the way he impressed his hearers. *The New York Critique*, at the time of the Parliament of Religions, wrote, "But eloquent as were many of the speeches no one expressed so well the spirit of the Parliament of Religions and its limitations as the Hindu monk . . . he is an orator by Divine Right, and his strong intelligent face in its picturesque setting of yellow and orange was hardly less interesting than those earnest words and the rich rhythmical utterance he gave them."

On another occasion the *Press of America* wrote: "The eloquence of the man with intellect beaming from his face, his splendid English in des-

cribing the beauties of his time-honoured faith, all conspired to make a deep impression on the audience."

As a last example we may quote a disciple, Mrs. Mary C. Funke, who describes her first impressions of the Swami: "I can see him yet as he stepped upon the platform, a regal, majestic figure, vital, forceful, dominant, and at the first sound of the wonderful voice, a voice all music—now like the plaintive minor strain of an Eolian harp, again, deep, vibrant, resonant—there was a hush, a stillness that could be almost felt, and the vast audience breathed as one man."

These quotations speak for themselves. We get a vivid picture of a strong personality, a musical voice and great eloquence. Many loved and admired him, some hated and fought him, but very few were neutral.

With regard to the ideas, the style, the fire and emotion which he put into his speeches and lectures, we may read the transcripts which are to be found in his Complete Works. These, in fact, form the bulk of the eight volumes. Among the best and most eloquent are to be found his lectures on *Jnana Yoga* and his lectures given when he returned to India from his first trip abroad. An example may be given from each, although the general level is so high that it is not easy to make a particular selection. Extracts also suffer when removed from their contexts.

In his lecture on *Immortality*⁴ he says: "What makes you weak? What makes you fear? Stand up then and be free. Know that every thought and word that weakens you in this world is the only evil that exists. Whatever makes men weak and fear is the only evil to be shunned. What can frighten you? If the suns come down, and the moons crumble into dust, and systems after systems are hurled into annihilation, what is that to you? Stand as a rock; you are indestructible. You are the Self, the God of the universe. Say—'I am Existence Absolute, Bliss Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, I am He,' and like a lion breaking the cage, break your chain and be free for ever."

Here we see the greatness, the force, the strength of his thought, and a flow of words and ideas which captivates and inspires. We may take an example of his patriotic fervour from his *Reply to the Address at Ramnad*⁵. "The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems

to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking and a voice is coming to us—away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were, from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of Knowledge, and of love, and of work, India, this motherland of ours—a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more ; never is she going to sleep any more ; no outward powers can hold her back any more ; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.”

The eloquence and feeling come through clearly here in spite of the barriers presented by putting these words on the printed page. Perhaps the best statement of the power of Vivekananda's words, even in printed form, has been made by Romain Rolland. He said: “His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the mouth of the hero!”

Considering all this, there can be no doubt but that Swami Vivekananda was a great orator. He combined inspiration and eloquence, deep and profound thoughts with fire and emotion. He was capable of lifting his audience to high peaks of emotional experience. He stayed abroad only a few years, he spoke of strange and unfamiliar doctrines, but in spite of all obstacles he left a permanent mark on the West.

II. The Writer

A number of books by Swami Vivekananda has been published at various times, and his complete works have been collected and published in

eight volumes. But, as previously noted, the major portion of these eight volumes is made up of transcriptions of his lectures. He directly wrote a few articles and some portion of the book *Raja Yoga*, but apart from these few items his English prose writings consist mostly of his letters of which, fortunately, we possess quite a large number.

Letters usually reveal the character of the author more directly than other forms of literature. Written without thought of publication, they may be more relaxed and informal and may show various moods and personal thoughts and activities. Swami Vivekananda's letters are important, therefore, on many levels. Biographically they throw much light on his life and character. He guided the early development of Ramakrishna Order by his letters. Later, during the nationalist movement, political and social leaders in India turned to published editions of his letters for inspiration.

Vigour, forcefulness and strength are the most obvious qualities of his letters, and truly reflect his character. He displays many moods, some serious and some playful. Some express his deepest thoughts while others were written for the instruction and admonishment of disciples. When deeply moved, he rises to high levels of eloquence.

With close friends who were not disciples he is relaxed, and his letters to them are sometimes amusing, bantering, teasing and full of fun. The welfare of India, however, was a subject which always brought out fire, for such thoughts always stirred his feelings to the depths. He constantly tried to inspire his close disciples in India to do something big. His letters to them contain some of his strongest words. Dozens of examples might be given, but one will be enough to show his feelings and the high quality of his writing.

This extract is taken from a letter written from Chicago to one of his Madras disciples in 1894. "Who feels . . . for the two hundred millions of men and women sunken forever in poverty and ignorance? Where is the way out? Who feels for them? They cannot find light or education. Who will bring the light to them . . . who will travel from door to door bringing education to them? Let these people be your God . . . think of them, work for them, pray for them incessantly . . . the Lord will show

you the way. Him I call a *Mahatma* (great soul) whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a *Duratman* (wicked soul). Let us unite our wills on continued prayers for their good. We may die unknown, unpitied, unbewailed, without accomplishing anything . . . but not one thought will be lost. It will take effect, sooner or later. My heart is too full to express my feeling; you know it, you can imagine it. So long as millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them! I call those men who strut about in their finery, having got all their money by grinding the poor, wretches, so long as they do not do anything for those two hundred millions who are now no better than hungry savages! We are poor, my brothers, we are nobodies, but such have been always the instruments of the Most High. The Lord bless you all."^{5a}

It sometimes happened in America that his friends would try to give him advice about his affairs, usually involving some compromise. This was sure to evoke a fiery declaration of independence. One example may be given of his reply to one friend who had evidently given him some well-meaning advice about 'sweetness', 'humility' and 'compromise'.

Swami Vivekananda wrote, "I know full well how good it is for one's worldly prospects to be *sweet*. I do everything to be *sweet*, but when it comes to be a horrible compromise with the truth within, then I stop. I do not believe in humility. I believe in *samadarsitvam* . . . same state of mind with regard to all. . . Life is nothing! Death is a delusion! All this is not, God alone is! Fear not my soul! Be alone. Sister, the way is long, the time is short, evening is approaching. I have to go home soon. I have no time to give my manners a finish. I cannot find time to deliver my message . . . In one word, I have a message to give, I have no time to be sweet to the world, and every attempt at sweetness makes me a hypocrite. . . . Sister, do not take this amiss. But you are babies, and babies must submit to be taught. You have not yet drunk of that fountain which makes 'reason unreason—mortal immortal—this world a zero, and of man a God.' Come out if you can of this network of foolishness they call this *world*. Then I will call you indeed brave and free. If you cannot, cheer those

that dare dash this false God, society, to the ground and trample on its unmitigated hypocrisy: If you cannot cheer them, pray, be silent, but do not try to drag them down again into the mire with such nonsense as *compromise* and becoming nice and sweet."

On another such occasion, however, the result was a beautiful expression of spiritual truth. He had taken rooms in a poor section of New York, and one of his friends told him that the 'right kind of people' would never go there. These snobbish fears proved groundless, and Swami Vivekananda wrote as follows to another friend: "Lord! how hard it is for man to believe in thee and thy mercies! Shiva! Shiva! Where is the right kind and where is the bad, mother? It is all He! In the tiger and in the lamb, in the saint and sinner all He! In Him I have taken my refuge, body, soul and *Atman*. Will he leave me now after carrying me in His arms all my life? Not a drop will be in the ocean, not a twig in the deepest forest, not a crumb in the house of the god of wealth, if the Lord is not merciful. Streams will be in the desert and the beggar will have plenty, if He wills it. He seeth the sparrows fall. Are these but words, mother, or literal, actual life?

"Truce to this 'right sort of presentation' and the like. Thou art my right, Thou art my wrong, my Shiva, Lord, since I was a child I have taken refuge in Thee. Thou wilt be with me in the tropics or at the poles, on the tops of mountains or in the depths of oceans. My stay . . . my guide in life . . . my Refuge . . . my friend . . . my teacher . . . my God . . . my real Self. Thou wilt leave me, *never*."

We might quote endlessly, and give many powerful and moving excerpts from his letters, and this would give a much better idea of the great variety of moods and ideas expressed there. But these three extracts give some taste of his thoughts and feelings as found in his letters. It is clear that the letters of Swami Vivekananda should be placed among the most important of his works. We have already mentioned their effect on those who read them and who were inspired to lay down their lives in service of their motherland. But the force and vigour of his thought and style make many of the letters superb in the literary sense as well. Swami Vivekananda will long be remembered for his letters.

III. The Poet

We have said that Swami Vivekananda was gifted as a poet. Here again it is primarily the force and vigour of his thought and imagery that makes him effective rather than the form or felicity of expression. He did not write many poems, but a few of them were written during or shortly after intense spiritual or emotional experiences, and these are among the best and most effective.

The most vivid of these is *Kali the Mother*.⁶ He wrote this poem in Kashmir. At that time his mind was constantly and intensely absorbed in the thought of the Divine Mother, and he turned his attention particularly to the terrible, the painful and the hideous. Sister Nivedita has described this phase of his life. She says, "... 'the worship of the Terrible' now became his whole cry. Illness or pain would always draw forth the reminder that 'She is the organ. She is the pain. And she is the Giver of pain, Kali! Kali! Kali!'. 'His brain was teeming with thoughts, he said one day and his fingers would not rest till they were written down. It was that some evening that we came back to our houseboat from some expedition and found waiting for us, where he had called and left them, his manuscript lines on *Kali the Mother*. Writing in a fever of inspiration, he had fallen on the floor, when he had finished—as we learnt afterwards—exhausted, with his own intensity.”⁷

It is not surprising, then, to find that the poem combines deep thoughts with vivid imagery and symbolism.

“The stars are blotted out,
 The clouds are covering clouds,
 It is darkness vibrant, sonant.
 In the roaring, whirling wind
 Are the souls of a million lunatics
 Just loose from the prison house,
 Wrenching trees by the roots,
 Sweeping all from the path.

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Thou Time! the All-Destroyer!
 Come, O Mother, Come!
 Who dares misery Love,
 And hug the form of Death,
 Dance in Destruction's dance,
 To him the Mother comes."

It is not easy to understand this poem. It is foreign to conventional and sentimental pictures of God. Yet, we get a picture, one of terror and darkness, a chaos of destruction, and it yields its meaning slowly if studied deeply. We need not go into it further here ; as a first step it may be regarded simply as a corrective to the conventional idea. In any case, as poetry it is superb.

Another poem which he wrote in a mood of spiritual intensity was *The Song of the Sannyasin*.⁸ This was written in America at the Thousand Island Park. He had given spiritual teachings and instructions to a small selected group of close disciples and had given monastic initiation to some of them. His thoughts turned towards the meaning and ideal of renunciation as expressed in the life of the *Sannyasin*. Then he wrote the poem, which gives clearly and uncompromisingly the monastic ideal. The appeal of the poem is primarily the idea.

"Wake up the note! the song that had its birth
 Far off, where worldly taint could never reach.
 In mountain caves, and glades of forest deep,
 Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth or fame
 Could ever dare to break ; where rolled the stream
 Of knowledge, truth, and bliss that follows both.
 Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold! Say . . .
 'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

* * * *

Where seekest thou? That freedom, friend, this world
 Nor that can give. In books and temples vain
 Thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds

The rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament,
 Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold! Say . . .
 'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

* * * *

Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent
 Release the soul forever. No more is birth,
 Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The 'I'
 Has All become, the All is 'I' and Bliss.
 Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say . . .
 'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Another simple but memorable poem is *Requiescat in Pace*.⁹ It was written in memory of J. J. Goodwin, a beloved disciple who had come to India with Vivekananda, and who died some time later. The first verse may be given:

"Speed forth, O Soul! upon thy star-strewn path;
 Speed, blissful one! where thought is ever free,
 Where time and space no longer mist the view,
 Eternal peace and blessings be with thee!"

Swami Vivekananda had to face much hardship, opposition and grief in his life. He knew full well the difficulties of life, but he always admired the fighter, the man who could persevere and go on in spite of all obstacles. One poem, *The Song of the Free*,¹⁰ expresses the idea of the Divine in man and how one should always press towards the realization of this goal in spite of all difficulties. We may give two verses which vividly and beautifully express this ideal of determination in the face of adversity:

"Let eyes grow dim and heart grow faint,
 And friendship fail and love betray,
 Let Fate its hundred horrors send,
 And clotted darkness block the way—

All nature wear one angry frown,
To crush you out—still know, my soul,
You are Divine. March on and on,
Nor right nor left but to the goal."

No more need be quoted from his poems. These examples are from some of his best and show the power and beauty of his thought.

IV. Conclusion

Swami Vivekananda is likely to perplex and embarrass the casual student of literature. He is too demanding. He does not leave you neutral. He requires commitment. Most of those who listen to orators, read books and sigh over poetry expect only to be amused, or at most, moved. They wish their emotions to be aroused . . . but not too far. They do not want their lives to be changed. Swami Vivekananda cannot be read in this way, for entertainment or a gentle stimulation of the aesthetic sense. He is too dangerous for the majority of readers. Nonetheless, as we have shown, he did make important contributions to literature.

He was first of all a Sage, a spiritual giant who led seeking souls to Liberation, to Eternal Bliss. He was secondly, and more obviously to the world, a leader of men. He roused up a sleeping India and began the process of her growth and regeneration. He worked also to reconcile the East and the West. He did all this and much more. The aspects of his life which we have been considering were largely peripheral to his main purpose. And though peripheral, it is interesting and surprising to see how well he mastered them. He was an Orator, a Writer and a Poet and it is safe to say that his achievements in these fields will be long remembered.

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44. *Minneapolis Journal*, November 27, 1893, for Swamiji's speech at Minneapolis.
45. *Minneapolis Star*, November 25, 1893, as above.
46. *Narayana, Falgun*, 1323 B.S., *Kartik and Paus*, 1326 B.S. and *Baisakh*, 1327 B.S.
47. *New York Daily Tribune*, May 1894 for Swamiji's lecture on "India and Re-incarnation", and December 31, 1894 for Swamiji's speech on "Religions of India" delivered on 30.12.1894.
48. *New York Herald*, October 1, 1893 and January 19, 1896 for an article on "Swami Vivekananda and his American disciple—Swami Kripananda".
49. *Northampton Daily Herald*, April, 1894, for Swamiji's speech at Northampton.
50. *Open Court*, October 12, 1893.
51. *Outlook*, March-April, 1894, for adverse views.
52. *Prabuddha-Bharat*, March, October and December, 1897; January, 1898; January, 1906, January, 1907; June, 1911; November, 1922; July, 1923; February, March and April, 1927; February, 1930; January, 1934; October, 1934; January to December, 1935; September, 1936; August, 1938; February, 1939; Golden Jubilee November, 1945; December, 1949; September and October, 1933 and May 1956; September, 1958; February and March, 1959; January and July, 1960; March, April, June, July and November, 1961; and May, 1963.
53. *Saginow Evening News*, March, 1894 for Swamiji's lecture on "Harmony of Religions".
54. *Salem Daily Gazette*, August 29 and September 5, 1893, for Swamiji at Salem.
55. *Salem Evening News*, August 24 and 29 and September 1, 1893, for as above.

56. *Smith's College Monthly*, May, 1894, for Swamiji's speech in the College.
57. *Standard*, October 23, 1895, for Swamiji's London lecture on "Self-Knowledge".
58. *Standard Union*, January, 1895 for Swamiji's speech on "Ideal of Womanhood".
59. *Statesman*, November, 1894, for some articles for and against Swamiji; February 20, 1897 for Calcutta reception; March 5, 1897, for the speech at Star Theatres; July 8, 1902, obituary notice with a biographical sketch of the Swamiji.
60. *Streater Daily Free Press*, October 9, 1893, for a speech at Streater.
61. *Sun, The*, September 2, 1894, for American reaction to Indians' appreciation of Swamiji's work in America and October 15, 1894 for Swamiji's speech at Baltimore.
62. *Sunday News Tribune*, March 18, 1894.
63. *Sunday Thoughts*, February 1, 1894.
64. *Times Press*, March 19 and 21, for Swamiji's lectures at Bay City, Michigan.
65. *Udbodhana*, See below.
66. *Unity and the Minister*, 1894, for an adverse view.
67. *Vedanta Kesari*, May and December, 1922; January, 1923; February, 1923; September, 1924; May, 1927; January, 1932; January, 1934; February, 1937; January and April, 1961.
68. *Vedanta and the West*—Nos. 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 119, 121, 126, 127, 131, 134, 135, 158 and 159, for various lectures delivered by Swamiji in America and articles on him.
69. *Washington Post*, October 29, 1894 for Swamiji's speech on "All Religions are Good" delivered at Washington on 28.10.1894.
70. *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 21, 1893 for a lecture delivered at Wisconsin.

উদ্ধোধন*

১৩০৫-০৬ ১ম বর্ষ :	স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের সাহিত্য কথোপকথন, পৃঃ ৬১
১৯০৬-০৭ ৩য় বর্ষ :	স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ, ঢাকা হইতে প্রেরিত পত্র, পৃঃ ২২৯
১৩০৭-০৮ ৪র্থ বর্ষ :	স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ, পৃঃ ৭০৩
১৩০৮-০৯ ৫ম বর্ষ :	স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ, (জীবনী-অনুবাদ), পৃঃ ১৭
	স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (হিন্দু পত্রিকা হইতে) পৃঃ ৮৩
	স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের স্মৃতিসভা (আমেরিকায়), পৃঃ ৫২
	স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের প্রচার কার্য 'প্রীম' লিখিত, পৃঃ ১৩৮ এবং ১৬৭
	স্বামী বিবেকানন্দস্মৃতি-মন্দির, পৃঃ ৩৭৪
	স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মাৎসব : পৃঃ ১১০
	স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের মহাসমাধি : পৃঃ ৩২০ (অতিরিক্ত)
	স্বামীজীর কথা—গ্রীহরিপদ মিত্র কর্তৃক, পৃঃ ১২৮, ২৫২ এবং ৪৭৯
	স্বামীজীর প্রতি (কবিতা)—শ্রীশরৎচন্দ্র চক্রবর্তী, পৃঃ ৯৭

* এই নিষ্পষ্ট সংকলন কার্যে উদ্ধোধনের বর্তমান সম্পাদক স্বামী নিরাময়ানন্দজী মহারাজ যে সহায়তা করিয়াছেন, তাহার জন্য কৃতজ্ঞতা জানাইতেছি।—সংকলক।

- ১৩০৯-১০ ৬ষ্ঠ বর্ষ : বিবেকানন্দাষ্টকম্ — শ্রীশরৎচন্দ্র চক্রবর্তী, পৃঃ ২১৯
 ঐ বঙ্গানুবাদ — পৃঃ ২২০
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের সহিত দুই চারিটি দিন, পৃঃ ১৬১
 স্বামীজীর কথা — শ্রীহরিপদ মিত্র, পৃঃ ১৫৬, ২৫৭ এবং ৪৩৪
 স্বামীজীর স্মৃতি — শ্রীপ্রিয়নাথ সিংহ, পৃঃ ৪৪৯
 স্বামি-শিষ্য-সংবাদ — শ্রীশরৎচন্দ্র চক্রবর্তী, পৃঃ ১৮৩, ২২৫ এবং ৩০৩
 — ৬ষ্ঠ হইতে ১৪শ বর্ষ পর্যন্ত চলিয়াছে।
- ১৩১০-১১ ৭ম বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (সঙ্গীত) — শ্রীগিরিশচন্দ্র ঘোষ, পৃঃ ১৫৭
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (সঙ্গীত) — স্বামী সারদানন্দ, পৃঃ ১৫৮
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ — শ্রীসুৱেন্দ্রনাথ সেনগুপ্ত, পৃঃ ৩৫৩
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও খেতড়িৱাজ — শ্রীপ্রিয়নাথ সিংহ, পৃঃ ৪৩২
 বুদ্ধগয়ায় স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ — শ্রীপ্রিয়নাথ সিংহ, পৃঃ ৪৭৪
 শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ ও স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ, — পৃঃ ৪১
 স্বামীজীর স্মৃতি — শ্রীপ্রিয়নাথ সিংহ, পৃঃ ২৫৭ এবং ৪০৪
 স্বামীজী-স্মৃতি — শ্রীসুৱেন্দ্রনাথ সেন, পৃঃ ২২৫
- ১৩১১-১২ ৮ম বর্ষ : স্বামী অখণ্ডানন্দ লিখিত স্বামীজীর পত্রের ভূমিকা, পৃঃ ৩২১
 পাশ্চাত্যদেশে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের প্রচার কার্যের সংক্ষিপ্ত ভূমিকা
 — এস, ই, ওয়ালডো কব্জক (অনুবাদ), পৃঃ ১০৮
 স্বামীজী ও শিল্প — শ্রীপ্রিয়নাথ সিংহ, পৃঃ ৩২৬
- ১৩১২-১৩ ৯ম বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও তাঁহার দেশের প্রতি ভালবাসা
 — শ্রীসুৱেন্দ্রনাথ সেন, পৃঃ ৩৮৯
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও বঙ্গীয় যুবকগণ — শ্রীগিরিশচন্দ্র ঘোষ, পৃঃ ৭২
 আলোয়ানে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ — শ্রীশ্রমণক, পৃঃ ১ এবং ২৪২
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মোৎসব, পৃঃ ৫৩ এবং ৬৯০
- ১৩১৩-১৪ ১০ম বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও বর্তমান যুগের অভাব — 'কা', পৃঃ ২০০
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মোৎসব, পৃঃ ৬৫
- ১৩১৪-১৫ ১১শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের অসম্পূর্ণ রচনাবলী, পৃঃ ৫৮২ এবং ৬৫১
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মোৎসব, পৃঃ ৪০
 রামকৃষ্ণদেব ও স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ — শ্রীকিরণচন্দ্র দত্ত, পৃঃ ২৩৪
- ১৩১৬-১৭ ১৩শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের সহিত মাদুরায় এক ঘণ্টা, পৃঃ ৫৮৪
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের সাধন-ফল — শ্রীগিরিশচন্দ্র ঘোষ, পৃঃ ২২১
 স্বামীজীর স্মৃতি — শ্রীপ্রিয়নাথ সিংহ, পৃঃ ৯৩
- ১৩১৭-১৮ ১৪শ বর্ষ : হার্ভার্ড বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ, পৃঃ ৩৩৭ এবং ৩৯৭
 শ্রীমদ্ স্বামী বিবেকানন্দপঞ্চকম্ — স্বামী রামকৃষ্ণানন্দ, পৃঃ ৬০
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মোৎসব, পৃঃ ১১০
- ১৩১৮-১৯ ১৫শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মোৎসব (একপঙক্তোম), ৬২, ১৮৬ এবং ৭৮১
 স্বামীজীর অস্ফুট স্মৃতি — স্বামী শূদ্রানন্দ, পৃঃ ৩৩১
- ১৩১৯-২০ ১৬শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ কি শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ হইতে বিরুদ্ধ মত প্রচার করিয়াছেন?
 — পৃঃ ৩৫২
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মোৎসব, পৃঃ ১২৪ এবং ৭৮০
- ১৩২০-২১ ১৭শ বর্ষ : বিবেকানন্দ — জনৈকা আমেরিকান শিষ্যা, পৃঃ ১০৬ এবং ১৬৪
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা) — শ্রীতারাপদ মুখোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৫৮

আচার্য্য বিবেকানন্দ, যেমনটি দেখিয়াছি—সিস্টার নিবেদিতা, অনুবাদ—
পৃঃ ৩৫১, ৪০৫, ৪৭৪, ৫৪৭, ৬১৯, ৬৮৯ এবং ৭৪২, — ১৮শ এবং
১৯শ বর্ষ পর্যন্ত চলিয়াছে।

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মোৎসব, পৃঃ ৫৪

আমেরিকায় স্বামীজী, পৃঃ ২১৯ এবং ২৮৩

স্বামীজীর অক্ষুট স্মৃতি—স্বামী শঙ্করানন্দ, পৃঃ ১১৩, ১৪৪ এবং ১৯৮

১৩২১-২২ ১৮শ বর্ষ :

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—শ্রীকুমারদত্ত সেন, পৃঃ ১৬১

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও বর্তমান যুগধর্ম—শ্রীদেবেন্দ্রনাথ বসু, পৃঃ ৪৯১

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ স্মরণে (কবিতা) শ্রীভুজঙ্গধর রায়চৌধুরী, পৃঃ ১২১

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মোৎসব, পৃঃ ১২২

১৩২২-২৩ ১৯শ বর্ষ :

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—শ্রীভুবনমোহন হাওলাদার, পৃঃ ১৫২

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—শ্রীসত্যেন্দ্রনাথ মজুমদার, পৃঃ ২২২

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—শ্রীনির্মলচন্দ্র সরকার, পৃঃ ৭৬৪

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের বাণী—শ্রীকুমারদত্ত সেন, পৃঃ ২৮৮

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মোৎসব— পৃঃ ১১৭

স্বামীজী ও ভক্তিতত্ত্ব—শ্রীকুমারদত্ত সেন, পৃঃ ৬০৩

১৩২৩-২৪ ২০শ বর্ষ :

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ স্মরণে—ডঃ রাধাকমল মুকোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ১৪৪-

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের স্বাভিযুক্তি, পৃঃ ৭০৯

১৩২৪-২৫ ২১শ বর্ষ :

বিবেকানন্দ—মহারাজ মণীন্দ্রচন্দ্র নন্দী, পৃঃ ১২৪

বিবেকানন্দ ও সেবধর্ম, পৃঃ ৬০৪

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ-আহ্বান—শ্রীসত্যেন্দ্রনাথ মজুমদার, পৃঃ ৪৭২

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মোৎসব—পৃঃ ১২১-

১৩২৫-২৬ ২২শ বর্ষ :

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ-প্রসঙ্গ—শ্রীউপেন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত, পৃঃ ১৯৭-

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও সার্বজনীন ধর্ম—সন্ন্যাসী, পৃঃ ৬৮-, ১০৩-

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ স্মরণে (কবিতা)—শ্রীসত্যেন্দ্রনাথ মজুমদার, পৃঃ ৯২

১৩২৬-২৭ ২৩শ বর্ষ :

বিবেকানন্দ—শ্রীহেমচন্দ্র মজুমদার, পৃঃ ১৬৬

বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—প্রসাদ, পৃঃ ২৩০

বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—শ্রীআশুতোষ সেনগুপ্ত, পৃঃ ১১

বিবেকানন্দ—শ্রীপ্রমথনাথ সিকদার, পৃঃ ৪৭১, পৃঃ ৫৩১

বিবেকানন্দ ও ধর্ম—ব্রহ্মচারী অখণ্ড চৈতন্য, পৃঃ ৬০৫

বর্তমান সমস্যায় স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—স্বামী বাসুদেবানন্দ, পৃঃ ৭২, ১৪৪,
২০৫, ২৬৫, ৪৫৫

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দশ্রোত্রম—শ্রীদক্ষিণারঞ্জন ভট্টাচার্য, পৃঃ ৬০৩

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ স্মরণম্—শ্রীকালীপদ তর্কাচার্য, পৃঃ ৫৯১

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—শ্রীঅনিল মুকোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ১৬৪

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও মানসীরাণী—শ্রীমতী সত্যবালা দেবী, পৃঃ ৪৪

ভারতীয় সমস্যায় শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দ—বিদ্যার্থী মনোরঞ্জন, পৃঃ ৬৫২,

পৃঃ ৭১৪

পরমহংসদেবের সহিত স্বামীজীর সাক্ষাৎ—স্বামী ভূমানন্দ, পৃঃ ২১৫

১৩২৭-২৮ ২৪শ বর্ষ :

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও বর্তমান যুগ—শ্রীসত্যেন্দ্রনাথ মজুমদার, পৃঃ ১৪

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মতিথি—শ্রীসত্যেন্দ্রনাথ মজুমদার, পৃঃ ১৩৪

১৩৩০-৩১ ২৬শ বর্ষ :

যুগধর্মে—স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—জ্যোতিপ্রসাদ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৩৫

রামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দ ও সার্বভৌমিক বেদান্ত—ব্রঃ ধ্যানচৈতন্য, পৃঃ ৭৩১

- স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ স্মরণে—অরুণপ্রসাদ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৬৮
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও কর্মজীবনে বৈদ্যুত—সুশীলকুমার দেব, পৃঃ ২৬৫
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ প্রণতি (স্তোত্র)—শ্রীদক্ষিণারঞ্জন শাস্ত্রী, পৃঃ ৩২১
 শ্রীমৎ স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জীবনের কয়েকটি ঘটনাবলী—শ্রীমহেন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত,
 পৃঃ ৪০৭, ৪৬৪
 রামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দ ও সার্বভৌমিক বৈদ্যুত—ব্রঃ ধ্যানচৈতন্য, পৃঃ ৭৩১
 ১৩৩১-৩২ ২৭শ বর্ষ : রামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দ ও সার্বভৌমিক বৈদ্যুত—ব্রঃ ধ্যানচৈতন্য, পৃঃ ১৫,
 ১৮৪, ২৩৫
 বিবেকানন্দের তত্ত্ববিচার—শ্রীসাহাজদী, পৃঃ ৩২
 বঙ্গসাহিত্যে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—স্বামী চন্দ্রেশ্বরানন্দ, পৃঃ ২৯৪
 জাতি সংগঠক শ্রীবিবেকানন্দ—স্বামী অব্যক্তানন্দ, পৃঃ ৫৫৫
 ১৩৩৩-৩৪ ২৯শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জীবন-ধর্ম—বলাই দেবশর্মা, পৃঃ ৪৮, ১২০, ১৭৭
 কবি বিবেকানন্দ—সুধীরচন্দ্র চাকী, পৃঃ ১৪৭
 বিবেক-বন্দনা (কবিতা)—জগদীন্দ্র বাগচি, পৃঃ ২৩৮
 স্বামীজী (কবিতা)—কানাইলাল ঘোষ, পৃঃ ৩৫৯
 সংস্কারক বিবেকানন্দ—বলাই দেবশর্মা, পৃঃ ৫০১
 বিজয়ী বিবেকানন্দ—বলাই দেবশর্মা, পৃঃ ৭০৭
 ১৩৩৪-৩৫ ৩০শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের পত্র—সম্পাদকীয়, পৃঃ ৯, ৭৮, ১৩৫
 রামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দ—রোমাঁ রোলাঁ, পৃঃ ৭৩
 মার্কিন মহিলা কবি ও স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—প্রিয়রঞ্জন সেন, পৃঃ ২২০
 আত্মদ্রষ্টা বিবেকানন্দ—অবনীনাথ রায়, পৃঃ ৩৩২
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 নরদেব (কবিতা)—সন্তোষকুমার ঘোষ, পৃঃ ৬৫
 বোধিসত্ত্ব বিবেকানন্দ—অনাথনাথ মুনোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৩১০
 বিবেকানন্দ বন্দনা (কবিতা)—নগেন্দ্র দেওয়ান, পৃঃ ৭০৫
 বর্তমান শিক্ষা সমস্যা ও স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—অমল দত্ত, পৃঃ ৭৩৬
 কাব্যসাহিত্য ও স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—ক্ষিতীশচন্দ্র দেব, পৃঃ ৭৪৫
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 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—প্রফুল্লচন্দ্র ভট্টাচার্য, পৃঃ ১৫
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—অধ্যাপক রাধাকৃষ্ণান, পৃঃ ৭১
 স্বামীজী (কবিতা)—বিভূতিভূষণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৬৫
 নব্যভারতের ধর্মাদর্শ—জয়গোপাল বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, শরৎচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায়,
 সুভাষচন্দ্র বসু, পৃঃ ৬৯
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও ভারতের জাতীয়তা—হরষিত সেনগুপ্ত, পৃঃ ২৫৭
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জীবনী ও বাণী—অমিয়া সেন, পৃঃ ৬৫৮
 ১৩৩৮-৩৯ ৩৪শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—মহাদেব চট্টোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ২৬
 ভারতের জাতীয় সমস্যায় স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—স্বামী সুন্দরানন্দ, পৃঃ ২৮
 বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—অধ্যাপক বিনয়কুমার সরকার, পৃঃ ১২৬
 বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—সত্যচরণ চৌধুরী, পৃঃ ১৪৪
 স্বামীজীর স্মৃতি—সিষ্টার ফ্রিচিন, পৃঃ ২০১
 ধর্মপ্রচারে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—শিবশঙ্কু সরকার, পৃঃ ৬৪৭

- ১৩৩৯-৪০ ৩৫শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের জন্মোৎসব (কবিতা) — বাণীপাণি চৌধুরী, পৃঃ ৪০
 স্বামীজীর স্মৃতি — সিস্টার ক্রিস্টিন, পৃঃ ৪৫
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ — ব্রজেন্দ্রনাথ দেব, পৃঃ ৫১
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও তাঁহার বাণী — মিঃ এ. এন্. সেন, পৃঃ ১৫০
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা) — অমূল্য রায়চৌধুরী, পৃঃ ১৫৫
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা) — অবনীকুমার দে, পৃঃ ২১১
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা) — কালিপদ চক্রবর্তী, পৃঃ ৬১৭
- ১৩৪০-৪১ ৩৬শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের সমাধিস্থানের সন্দর্শনে (কবিতা)
 (অনুবাদ) — ডাঃ পিটার বইকি, পৃঃ ১০১
 বিবেকানন্দ — দুমখো ছুরি — অধ্যাপক বিনয়কুমার সরকার, পৃঃ ১২৯
 ভারতীয় নারী ও অস্পৃশ্যতা সম্বন্ধে যদুগাচার্য বিবেকানন্দের বাণী, পৃঃ ২৫৯
 বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা) — বীরেন্দ্রকুমার গুপ্ত, পৃঃ ২৭৩
 স্বামীর প্রয়াণ (কবিতা—অনুবাদ) — ডাঃ পিটার বইকি, পৃঃ ৩২৩
 বাণীবাহক স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ — উপেন্দ্রকুমার কর, পৃঃ ৩৫৭
 ১৩৪১-৪২ ৩৭শ বর্ষ : বাণীবাহক স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ — উপেন্দ্রকুমার কর, পৃঃ ২৭, ৭৩
 জাতিগঠনে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ — বনলতা গুহ, পৃঃ ৪৫, ৮৫
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ — হীরেন্দ্রকুমার বসু, পৃঃ ১৫৪
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ — ডাঃ যাদুগোপাল মুখোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ২০৯
 বিবেকানন্দের বাণী — কুমুদবন্ধু সেন, পৃঃ ৩১০
 ভারতে বিবেকানন্দ — উপেন্দ্রকুমার কর, পৃঃ ৩২৫ ইঃ
 বিবেকানন্দ স্বামী (কবিতা) — অপর্ণা দেবী, পৃঃ ৪০২
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- ১৩৪৩-৪৪ ৩৯শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা) — বিমলচন্দ্র ঘোষ, পৃঃ ৬৩
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 স্বামীজী (কবিতা) — সুরেন্দ্রমোহন শাস্ত্রী, পৃঃ ৩৪৩
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- ১৩৪৪-৪৫ ৪০শ বর্ষ : স্বামীজী (কবিতা) — পুণ্ড্রেন্দ্র রায়, পৃঃ ১৭
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- ১৩৪৫-৪৬ ৪১শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের বন্দনা (কবিতা) — সত্যেন্দ্র জানা, পৃঃ ৮৯
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- ১৩৪৬-৪৭ ৪২শ বর্ষ : স্বামীজীর স্মৃতি সঙ্কলন — স্বামী নির্লেপানন্দ, পৃঃ ১১ ইঃ
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের নেশন গঠন — সম্পাদকীয়, পৃঃ ৫৭, ১১৩
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ — স্যার মরিস গয়ার, পৃঃ ৮৯

- ১৩৪৮-৪৯ ৪৪শ বর্ষ :
 বৈদান্তিক স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—এম্মা কাল্‌ভি, পৃঃ ২৩৫
 স্বামীজী স্মরণে (কবিতা)—বিনয়ভূষণ সেনগুপ্ত, পৃঃ ২৬৩
 বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—সুবোধ চন্দ্রবর্তী, পৃঃ ৩১৭
 শিল্পাচার্য্য অবনীন্দ্রনাথ ও স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের যুগ
 —ডঃ কালিদাস নাগ, পৃঃ ৫৬৯
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও গণ-সহযোগ, পৃঃ ৬২৭
- ১৩৫০-৫১ ৪৬শ বর্ষ :
 রোমাঁ রোলান্‌র দৃষ্টিতে বিবেকানন্দ—বিজয়লাল চট্টোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৫৫
 বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—সত্যনারায়ণ ঘোষ, পৃঃ ১৬৪
 শ্রীঅরবিন্দের উপর শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ ও বিবেকানন্দের প্রভাব
 —গিরিজাশঙ্কর রায়চৌধুরী, পৃঃ ২৪১
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—নকুলেশ্বর পাল, পৃঃ ২৫০
 বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—যতীন্দ্রনাথ দাস, পৃঃ ৩৯৪
 স্বাধীনতার পূজারী বিবেকানন্দ—বিজয়লাল চট্টোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৪৩০
 শ্রীবিবেকানন্দ সংগুন—স্বামী নির্লেপানন্দ, পৃঃ ৪৪৮
 স্বামীজী ও সেবাস্বর্গ—কবিশেখর কালিদাস রায়, পৃঃ ৪৫৭
 বিবেকানন্দ ও গণ-আন্দোলন—বিজয়লাল চট্টোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৪৭৬
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের বাণী (কবিতা)—প্রভাকর মালি, পৃঃ ৪০১
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের প্রতি (কবিতা)—শ্যামাপদ সেন, পৃঃ ৪৬৯
- ১৩৫১-৫২ ৪৭শ বর্ষ :
 বিবেকানন্দ সংগুন—স্বামী নির্লেপানন্দ, পৃঃ ১৬
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের অপ্রকাশিত বক্তৃতা—সম্পাদকীয়, পৃঃ ৩১, ৬১
 শ্রীবিবেকানন্দের স্ম-সমাচার—স্বামী নির্লেপানন্দ, পৃঃ ৬৭
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—তারাকুমার ঘোষ, পৃঃ ১৪১
 সাধক বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—সুকুমার দত্ত, পৃঃ ৩৬৮
- ১৩৫২-৫৩ ৪৮শ বর্ষ :
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—বিবেকানন্দ পাল, পৃঃ ৩৬
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও যুগধর্ম—রমণীকুমার দত্ত, পৃঃ ৯৯
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—ধীরেন্দ্র ভৌমিক, পৃঃ ১০৬
 বিবেকানন্দ বোধন (কবিতা)—শচীন্দ্র ভট্টাচার্য্য, পৃঃ ১৫১
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—তারাপদ চৌধুরী, পৃঃ ১৭২
 মূর্ত্তি-আন্দোলন ও বিবেকানন্দ—কালিদাস মূর্ত্তোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৫১১
 স্বামীজীর উত্তরসাধক গান্ধীজী—বিজয়লাল চট্টোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৬৪৩
- ১৩৫৩-৫৪ ৪৯শ বর্ষ :
 আমাদের বর্ত্তমান দৃগতি ও স্বামীজী—অমূল্যভূষণ সেন, পৃঃ ১২৫
 বিবেকানন্দ স্মরণে (কবিতা)—চিন্তা দেব, পৃঃ ২৩২
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—অরবিন্দ বসু, পৃঃ ২৪৫
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও নবভারতের ভাবাদর্শ—সেবারত গুপ্ত, পৃঃ ২৬৫
 স্বদেশপ্রেমিক স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—উপেন্দ্রকুমার কর, পৃঃ ৩০৭
 স্বামীজীর জীবনালোকে গান্ধীজীর কর্মযোগ
 —জিতেন্দ্রনাথ চন্দ্রবর্তী, পৃঃ ৩২৮
 অহিংসা ও স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—সম্পাদকীয়, পৃঃ ৩৯৩
 যুগাচার্য্য স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—তারাপদ চৌধুরী, পৃঃ ৪২৬
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের স্বদেশপ্রেমের মর্মস্পর্শী বাণী
 —সম্পাদকীয়, পৃঃ ৪৯৫
 বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—ফণীভূষণ বিশ্বাস, পৃঃ ৫৮০

- ১৩৫৪-৫৫ ৫০শ বর্ষ : বেদান্ত ও বিবেকানন্দ—অক্ষয়কুমার বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ১৪৬
 বিবেকানন্দ স্মৃতি (কবিতা)—রাজেন্দ্রনাথ রায়, পৃঃ ১৮৯
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের বাণী—স্বামী অচলানন্দ, পৃঃ ২১৩
 যুগাচার্য বিবেকানন্দ—সেবারত গদ্যপ্ত, পৃঃ ২৫১
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের অপ্রকাশিত পত্র—সম্পাদকীয়, পৃঃ ২৬৪, ২৮১
 শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দ—বিপিনচন্দ্র পাল (অনুবাদ), পৃঃ ৩৫৭
 বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—রমেশচন্দ্র ভট্টাচার্য, পৃঃ ৩৬৭
 আমেরিকায় সহস্রাব্দীপোদ্যানস্থিত স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ
 আশ্রম (অনুবাদ)—এলিজাবেথ ডেভিডসন, পৃঃ ৪০১
 স্বামীজী ও গান্ধীজী—তামসরঞ্জন রায়, পৃঃ ৪১৫
 বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—সন্তোষকুমার বসু, পৃঃ ৫৪৬
 নবযুগ ও শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দ—সুরেন্দ্রনাথ চক্রবর্তী, পৃঃ ৫৯১
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের মহাপ্রয়াণে (অনুবাদ)
 —সিষ্টার নিবেদিতা, পৃঃ ৬২৬
- ১৩৫৫-৫৬ ৫১শ বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের অবদান—হেমেন্দ্রপ্রসাদ ঘোষ, পৃঃ ১৫, ৭৩
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও কস্ম্যোগ—কালীপদ চক্রবর্তী, পৃঃ ১২৭
 আমেরিকায় স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের বেদান্ত প্রচার
 (অনুবাদ)—স্বামী নিখিলানন্দ, পৃঃ ৩৪২
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও পণ্ডিত জওহরলাল
 —কালীপদ চক্রবর্তী, পৃঃ ৩৫৯
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের অপ্রকাশিত পাঁচখানা পত্র—পৃঃ ৪৫২
- ১৩৫৬-৫৭ ৫২তম বর্ষ : স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—শিশিরকুমার বসাক, পৃঃ ৩৩
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের স্মৃতি (অনুবাদ)
 —মিস্ ম্যাক্ লাউড, পৃঃ ৯৯২
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও সমাজতন্ত্রবাদ—সম্পাদকীয়, পৃঃ ১১৩
 হিন্দু-মুসলমান সমস্যা ও স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—সম্পাদকীয়, পৃঃ ২৮৩
 আমেরিকায় বেদান্ত প্রচার কার্যে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ
 —নীরদকুমার রায়, পৃঃ ৩১২
 শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দের আধ্যাত্মিক প্রভাব—উপেন্দ্র কর, পৃঃ ৩৫০
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের মহাসমাধি-সংবাদ, পৃঃ ৩৩৭, ৩৯৩, ৪৬৪, ৫০৫
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (অনুবাদ)—বিজয়লক্ষ্মী পণ্ডিত, পৃঃ ৪৯৫
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও নেতাজী সুভাষ বসু
 —কালীপদ চক্রবর্তী, পৃঃ ৫৪২
- ১৩৫৭-৫৮ ৫৩তম বর্ষ : শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দের আধ্যাত্মিক প্রভাব—উপেন্দ্রকুমার কর, পৃঃ ৪১
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—বীরেন্দ্রচন্দ্র ভট্টাচার্য, পৃঃ ১৫১
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—রাইমোহন পাল, পৃঃ ২৩৭
 চিরন্তন প্রশ্ন—স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—ডঃ কালিদাস নাগ, পৃঃ ৪৫৮
- ১৩৫৮-৫৯ ৫৪তম বর্ষ : বীর সন্ন্যাসী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—শশাঙ্কশেখর চক্রবর্তী, পৃঃ ২৮
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—বীরেশ্বর ভট্টাচার্য, পৃঃ ১৪৫
 যুগাচার্য স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—আশা দেবী পৃঃ ১৫০
 স্বামীজী—ডঃ প্রশান্তকুমার বসু পৃঃ ২৫৪
 মানুষ্য বিবেকানন্দ—বিভূতিভূষণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৩০১
 স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের বাণী—জয়প্রকাশ নারায়ণ, পৃঃ ৪৩২

- শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণের বাস্তবহ স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ—সম্পাদকীয়, পৃঃ ৬৪২
বীর সন্ন্যাসী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—অনুরচন্দ্র ধর, পৃঃ ৬৪৫
বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—সুধীর চৌধুরী, পৃঃ ৬৪৯
স্বামীজীর ব্যক্তিত্ব—স্বামী বিরজানন্দ, পৃঃ ৬৫০
স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও বিশ্বশান্তি—নৃত্যগোপাল রায়, পৃঃ ৬৫২
পাশ্চাত্যে বিবেকানন্দের বাণী (অনুবাদ)—দেনভান ড্রেটন, পৃঃ ৬৫৫
স্বামীজীর স্বদেশ প্রীতি—বিবেকানন্দ পাল, পৃঃ ৬৫৭
স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ (কবিতা)—তামসরঞ্জন রায়, পৃঃ ৬৬০
অঞ্জলি (স্বামীজী ও বর্তমান ভারত)—অজিতকুমার বিশ্বাস, পৃঃ ৬৬১
স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও রামকৃষ্ণ মিশন—সৈয়দ ফজল আলি, পৃঃ ৬৬৭
১৩৫৯-৬০ ৫৫তম বর্ষ : স্বামীজীর সান্নিধ্যে—শচীন্দ্রনাথ বসু, পৃঃ ৭, ১১৯, ১৮০
স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ও সক্রিয় বেদান্ত—শ্রীরঙ্গনাথ দিবাকর, পৃঃ ১৫২
বুদ্ধ ও বিবেকানন্দ—ভাগবত দাশগুপ্ত, পৃঃ ২৩৫
বিবেকানন্দ ও যুগধর্ম—বিজয়লাল চট্টোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ২৯৮
বিবেকানন্দ প্রসঙ্গে—গগনবিহারীলাল মেহতা, পৃঃ ৪৪৪
ঠাকুরের কতিপয় পার্শ্বদেব জন্মতারিখ ও জন্মতিথি
—বীষ্ণু মুখোপাধ্যায়, পৃঃ ৫৩০
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GLOSSARY

Abheda—अभेद : non-different.

Abhih—अभी : Fearless.

Abhyāsa—अभ्यास : practice.

Advaita—अद्वैत : Monism.

Advaitin—अद्वैतिन् : a believer in *Advaita* or Monism.

Āgama—आगम : Sacred Sanskrit texts of the Hindus devoted to the cult of Shiva (शिव).

Agastyaparva—अगस्त्यपर्व : lit. a chapter of Agastya. It is a poetical work in Old-Javanese dealing with the creation of the world in the style of the Indian Sanskrit Purānas.

Aham—अहम् : I.

Ahimsā—अहिंसा : non-violence—a principle of conduct common to the Buddhists and the Jains and also extolled by the Hindus.

Ajnāna—अज्ञान : ignorance.

Akarma—अकर्म : inaction.

Ālkhāllā—आलखाल्ला : long, loose robe.

Ānanda—आनन्द : bliss, joy.

Annamaya—अन्नमय : full of food, i.e., matter.

Ānandamaya—आनन्दमय : full of bliss.

Aparā—अपरा : ordinary, phenomenal.

Āratrika—आरत्रिक : the evening service with burning incense etc.

Arjuna-vivāha—अर्जुन-विवाह : lit. marriage of *Arjuna*, a poetical work in Old-Javanese based on episodes taken from the Indian Sanskrit epic the *Mahabharata*.

Arthasāstra—अर्थशास्त्र : Hindu Science of Politics. There are several books of this class in Sanskrit of which the best known is Kautilya's *Arthasastra*.

Āshrama—आश्रम : hermitage—ancient Hindu institution in which men lived lives dedicated to religious study and meditation.

Ashtānga—अष्टाङ्ग—is a compendium in Sanskrit on medicine and pathology written by Vagbhata, the third great name in Indian medicine, later than Charaka as well as Sushruta.

Ātman—आत्मन् : The Absolute or Soul.

Ātma-yajna—आत्मयज्ञ : sacrifice of the ego-sense.

Āvarana—आवरण : cover.

Avidyā—अविद्या : ignorance.

Bhābbār Kathā—भावবার কথা : (Beng): the name of a book written by Swami Vivekananda in Bengali.

Bhagavad-Gita—भगवद्-गीता : a sacred scripture forming a part of *Mahābhārata* containing a discourse on the essence of Hindu philosophy by way of a talk between Krishna (Incarnation of God) and Arjuna (one of the Pandava Brothers) in the battle-field of Kuruksetra.

- Bhakta—भक्त : the devotee.
- Bhakti—भक्ति : devotion, love, faith etc.
- Bhakti-yoga—भक्तियोग : the yoga or path of attaining the Absolute through *bhakti* or devotion.
- Bhārat—भारत : India.
- Bhārata-yuddha—भारतयुद्ध : lit. the war amongst the descendants of Bharata from whom is derived the name of Bhāratvarsha. It is a poetical work in Old-Javanese based on the Indian Sanskrit epic the Mahābhārata.
- Bhikshu—भिक्षु : Buddhist monk.
- Bhomakavya—भोमकाव्य : lit. episode of Bhoma or Naraka. A poetical work in Old-Javanese based on the Indian Sanskrit epic the Mahābhārata.
- Bhāva-rupa—भावरूप : positive principle.
- Bhūmā—भूमा : the incomparably great.
- Bikarma—बिकर्म : forbidden action.
- Brahmacharya—ब्रह्मचर्य : celibacy.
- Brahmadaitya—ब्रह्मदैत्य : hobgoblin.
- Brahma-Mandira—ब्रह्ममन्दिर : the temple of the Supreme spirit.
- Brahmarshi—ब्रह्मर्षि : a *rishi* or seer who has known the Absolute.
- Brahman—ब्रह्मण : The Absolute.
- Brahma-Sutra—ब्रह्मसूत्र : an authoritative exposition of the philosophy of the Upanishads.
- Brahma-sphuta-siddhānta—ब्रह्मस्फुटसिद्धान्त : is a treatise on Mathematics attributed to Brahmagupta, circa 7th century A.D.
- Brahmānda Purāna—ब्रह्माण्ड पुराण : lit. the Purana dealing with world. It is the name of one of the eighteen traditional Purānas in Sanskrit.
- Brahmavādin—ब्रह्मवादिन् : one who believes in *Brahman*.
- Brahma-Vihāra—ब्रह्म-विहार : dwelling with *Brahman* or the Absolute; an excursion in the realm of reality.
- Brihadāranyaka Upanishad—बृहदारण्यक-उपनिषद् : one of the important Upanishads.
- Brimha—बृह्म : a Sanskrit root-word.
- Chara—चर : spy.
- Charaka—चरक (संहिता) : is a Sanskrit treatise on medicine and treatment of diseases attributed to Charaka who is believed to have lived in the court of King Kanishka, circa 2nd century A.D.
- Chāṇakya-sataka—चाणक्यशतक : lit. a hundred sayings of Chāṇakya. A collection in Sanskrit of the sayings attributed to Chāṇakya or Kautilya, the author of the *Arthasāstra*.
- Chandi—चण्डी : a scriptural text embodied in Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna.
- Chelā—चेला : disciple.
- Chitta—चित्त : mind.
- Darshan—दर्शन : lit. sight; the reverential sight of a holy or great person; philosophy.
- Daridra-Nārāyaṇa—दरिद्र-नारायण : 'God in the poor'.
- Daivī prakṛiti—दैवी प्रकृति : divine attributes.

Dayá—दया : compassion.

Deválaya—देवालय : abode of gods;
a temple.

Devarāja—देवराज : name given to a
phallic emblem of Shiva, the Hindu
god, whose cult prevailed in Cambodia
in the ninth century A.D.

Dharmasāstra—धर्मशास्त्र : denotes
Smiritis and sometimes also Dharma-
Sutras which lay down the rules of
conduct, moral and legal laws, etc.

Dhuni—धुनी : fire kindled by a *sannyasi*.

Dunga—दुङ्गा : a house-boat available
at Srinagar in Kashmir.

Dutiya or duta—दुतिय or दुत : envoy.

Dvaita—द्वैत : Dualism.

Ekamevadvitīyam—एकेमेवाद्वितीयम् : one
without a second.

Fakir—फकिर : beggar; mendicant.

Ghati—घटि : a drinking pot made of
bell-metal.

Geruá—गेरुया : saffron coloured clothes
usually worn by *sannyasins*.

Ghát—घाट : landing place with steps.

Gitá—गीता : abbreviated form of
Bhagavad-Gitá.

Guṇa—गुण : lit. a quality. There are
three guṇas, viz *sattva*, *raja* and *tamah*.

Gúrú—गुरु : religious preceptor ; a
teacher.

Gurubhái—गुरुभाइ : brother disciples :
disciples of the same religious preceptor.

Guru-griha-vāsa—गुरुगृहवास : residence
in the home of the preceptor.

Harivamsa—हरिवंश : lit. the descen-
dants of Hari. A poetical work in
Old-Javanese based on the Indian
Sanskrit text of that name.

Hari-jana—हरिजन : Lit. the Men of
God—a name applied by Mahatma
Gandhi to the untouchables in Hindu
society.

Hinayāna—हीनयान : lit. lower vehicle
—name generally applied to indicate
the earlier form of Buddhism.
Adherents of this school of Buddhism
prefer to call it Theravāda (थेरवाद).

Ishta—इष्ट : lit. beneficent, wished
for. The special form and attri-
butes of the Divinity worshipped by a
devotee.

Isvara—ईश्वर : the Absolute with
qualities.

Kosha—कोष : sheath.

Krishnāyana—कृष्णायन : lit. the exploits
of Krishna. A poetical work in Old-
Javanese based on the Indian Sanskrit
Mahabharata.

Kundalini shakti—कुण्डलिनी शक्ति : lit.
coiled power, i.e., dormant spiritual
power within oneself.

Laghukaumudi—लघुकौमुदी : a treatise
on Sanskrit grammar.

Khandakhādyaka—खण्डखाद्यक : a trea-
tise in Sanskrit on Mathematics
written by Brahmagupta, circa 7th
century A.D.

Jal—जल : water.

Jata mat, tata path—यत मत तत पथ :
'as many opinions, so many ways'
(of salvation).

Jiva—जीव : a living being.

Jivanmukta—जीवन्मुक्त : "one who is in
the world but yet out of it."

Jnána—ज्ञान : knowledge.

Jnána-Yoga—ज्ञानयोग : the *yoga* (path)
of attaining the Absolute through jnána
or philosophical knowledge.

Jnáni—ज्ञानी : lit. the wise, the knowing;
one possessing jnána i.e. knowledge of
the Absolute.

Káli Pujá—कालीपूजा : Pujá i.e. worship
of Kali, the consort of *Shiva* and the
goddess of destruction.

Kamandalu—कमण्डलु : drinking vessel
made of dried water pumpkin with
a handle.

Kámya—काम्य : desired.

Kevaládvaita—केवलाद्वैत : unqualified
monism.

Laksmi Pujá—लक्ष्मीपूजा : Pujá i.e. wor-
ship of Laksmi, the goddess of wealth.

Laukika Dharma—लौकिक धर्म : reli-
gious practices of the common folk.

Lekhaprakása—लेखप्रकाश : a Sanskrit
manual on the art of writing found in
Kashmir.

Mádhukari bhikshá—माधुकरी भिक्षा :
Bhikshá means begging. *Madhukari*
bhikshá means begging from door to
door, generally practised by a
novice.

Mahábhárata—महाभारत : the second
great Sanskrit epic which relates the
story of the great war between the
Kurus and the Pandavas. It is attri-
buted to Vyása. It is a very big book,
divided into eighteen sections called
parvans and contains 100,000 verses.
It is a store-house of information about
ancient Indian culture and civiliza-
tion and is read with great veneration
by the Hindus.

Mahábháshya—महाभाष्य : the 'Great
Commentary' by Patanjali on the
Sanskrit grammar of Panini.

Mahánubhava Mahárāja—महानुभव
महाराज : lit. high-souled great king—
a royal title used by some Indian
rulers in the post-Kushana period.

Maharshi—महर्षि : lit. a great Rishi
or sage. Also used as an honorific
title to a highly religious person.

Mahárāja Rájatirāja deva—महाराज
राजातिराज देव : li. the great king,
supreme king of kings divine—an
honorific title assumed by some Indian
rulers in the post-Kushana period,
circa 3rd. century A.D..

Mahásamádhi—महासमाधि : deep trance,
from which there is no return to con-
sciousness; the passing away.

Mahávákya—महावाक्य : sacred maxim
of Vedanta.

Maháyána—महायान : lit. greater vehicle
—name applied to the later form of
Buddhism in which Gautama Buddha
is regarded as a god.

Makara Sankránti—मकर संक्रान्ति : last
day of the month of Paus when the

Makara, the tenth sign of the Zodiac, is in the ascendant.

Kanyá Kumári—कन्या कुमारी : Indian name of Cape Comorin.

Karma—कर्म : action, activity.

Karma-Yoga—कर्मयोग the *yoga* or path of attaining the Absolute through *karma* or work.

Kartábhajá—कर्तृभजा : a Hindu sect of worshippers founded by Aulchand.

Karmaváda—कर्मवाद, a doctrine which lays down the principle that the actions of a being influence the condition of his life in the next birth.

Kavya—काव्य : Big Sanskrit texts written in poetry.

Manomaya—मनोमय : full of mind cf. *Annamaya*.

Mantra—मन्त्र : sacred formulas, words or sentences used for worshipping the Divinity.

Math—मठ : monastery: temple.

“Máyá—माया : illusion.

Medhá Náđi—मेधा नाड़ी : nerve of intelligence.

Mithyá—मिथ्या : false.

Mlechha—म्लेच्छ : non-Hindu.

Moksha—मोक्ष : liberation, salvation.

Mugdhabodha—मुग्धबोध : treatise on Sanskrit grammar.

Mukti—मुक्ति : salvation; freedom from the fetters of life.

Múládhára—मूलाधार : one of the seven

psychic centres lying between the sex organ and the rectum.

Mundaka Upanishad—मुण्डक उपनिषद् : the Upanishad attributed to the sage Mundaka.

Nágánanda—नागानन्द : a Sanskrit drama attributed to King Harshavardhana (A.D. 606-647).

Náma-rupa—नामरूप : names and forms.

Navagraha-siddhánta—नवग्रह-सिद्धान्त : a Sanskrit astronomical text.

Neti, neti—नेति, नेति : not this, not this.’

Nidána—निदान : is a book on pathology in Sanskrit.

Nirákára—निराकार : formless.

Nirguṇa—निर्गुण : quality-less, characterless, indeterminate and impersonal.

Nirváṇa—निर्वाण : extinction of desires. The goal to be aimed at by a Buddhist.

Nirvikalpa jñána—निर्विकल्प-ज्ञान : pure consciousness.

Nirvikalpa samádhi—निर्विकल्प समाधि : profound and absolute absorption in divine meditation: perfect trance.

Nirviseśa—निर्विशेष : devoid of all distinctions.

Niskámakarma—निष्काम कर्म : work without any expectation of profit: work without attachment.

Nitisára—नीतिसार : lit. essence of morality. Name of a book in Sanskrit as well as in Old-Javanese.

Nitisāstra—नीतिशास्त्र : lit. the scripture on morality—a class of books dealing with rules of morality.

Nitya Dharma—नित्य धर्म : the Eternal verities.

Nyagrodha—न्यग्रोध : Indian fig tree.

Nyāya—न्याय : a branch of Hindu philosophy attributed to Gautama (गौतम).

Om—ओं : a monosyllabic sacred word and symbol indicating *Brahman*.

Pāni—पानि : drinking water.

Panchatantra—पञ्चतन्त्र : is a well-known Sanskrit book of fables containing wise maxims (see p. 13).

Parā—परा : Supreme.

Paramātmān—परमात्मन : the Absolute.

Paramārthikadristi—परमार्थिकदृष्टि : transcendental standpoint of knowledge.

Parivrājaka—परिव्राजक : the wanderer, a term generally applied to a mendicant who wanders from place to place.

Pous—पौष : the ninth month of the Indian almanac, covering the later part of December and the earlier part of January.

Prabuddha Bhārat—प्रबुद्धभारत : awakened India: name of the English organ of the Ramakrishna Order first started in Madras in 1898, and now published from Mayavati.

Prachya o Pāschatyā—प्राच्य ओ पाश्चात्य : lit. 'The East and the West': the name of a book in Bengali written by Swami Vivekananda.

Prānamaya—प्राणमय : full of life.

Prārabdha-karma—प्रारब्ध-कर्म : work that has already begun to bear fruits.

Pratyabhijnāna—प्रत्यभिज्ञान : recognition of the self by the self.

Pujāri—पूजारी : priest attached to the worship of an image.

Purāna—पुराण : traditional sacred semi-religious and semi-historical accounts of ancient Indian history. The Puranas are eighteen in number. Some of them contain dynastic lists of the ancient Indian kings. They are store-houses of ancient Indian myths and legends.

Rājarshi—राजर्षि : a king who is like a rishi or a seer in piety and spiritual knowledge.

Rājā-Yoga—राजयोग : a course of *yoga* or meditation based on the control of breathing and thinking i.e. on the suppression of the modification of the mind.

Rāmāyana—रामायण : the great Sanskrit epic describing the exploits of Rāma, the prince of Ayodhya, who is believed by orthodox Hindus to be an incarnation of God. It is attributed to Vālmiki, the first great Sanskrit poet. It is regarded as a sacred book by the orthodox Hindus.

Rishabha—ऋषभ : the second note of the eight Indian musical tunes viz *re* (रे).

Rishi—ऋषि : a seer.

Rudrāksha—रुद्राक्ष : beads made of dried fruits of a tree of the same name—used for rosary.

Sabda—शब्द : Treatise on Etymology and Grammar etc.

Sabda Brahman—शब्द ब्रह्मन् : *Brahman* indicated by a sound viz. *Om*.

Sádha—साधक : a worshipper practising austerities: one who practises spiritual austerities.

Sádhana—साधना : religious worship and effort; spiritual practices.

Sádhu—साधु : a monk.

Saguṇa—सगुण : qualified: personal and determinate.

Sahaja—सहज : natural.

Sahasrára—सहस्रार : one of the seven psychic centres situated within the head in the form of an up-turned lotus with a thousand petals.

Sákára—साकार : having forms.

Sálagrámasilá—शालग्रामशिला : a piece of stone marked with particular perforations and other symbols found in the waters of the river Gandaki and worshipped as an emblem of God Vishnu.

Samádhi—समाधि : complete absorption in meditation, losing all sense of the outside world; trance.

Sámasti—समष्टि : the whole, the total.

Samaveda—सामवेद : is one of the four Vedas. It is a *samhita* (संहिता) or collection of verses which were meant to be sung at the soma sacrifice.

Samíkshá—समीक्षा : a branch of Hindu philosophy. Also known as *Mimansa* (मीमांसा).

Samana—शमन=श्रमण Sans. *Sramana*, meaning a Buddhist monk.

Sámkhya—सांख्य : a system of Indian philosophy traditionally attributed to the sage Kapila.

Sanátan Dharma—सनातन धर्म : Dharma means Religion. *Sanatan dharma* means Eternal Religion, i.e. Religion not founded by any human being, but revealed by God. Hinduism claims to be such a religion.

Sangha—सङ्घ : an association: the Buddhist Order of monks.

Sánkhyā—सांख्य : A system of Indian philosophy.

Sannyása—सन्यास : Ordination as a monk; life of renunciation.

Saraswati—सरस्वती : the goddess of learning.

Sástra—शास्त्र : sacred scripture of the Hindus.

Sat-chit-ánanda—सच्चिदानन्द : existence, knowledge and bliss, a combination that signifies the Absolute.

Satyam, jnánam, anantam—सत्यम् ज्ञानम् अनन्तम् : real, conscious and infinite.

Savikalpa jnána—सविकल्प ज्ञान : partial knowledge of the Absolute.

Savikalpa samádhi—सविकल्प समाधि : partial immersion or absorption in meditation.

Sevá—सेवा : selfless service.

Sevya—सेव्य : the person to be served.

Sevaka—सेवक : server.

- Seváshrama—सेवाश्रम : a home of service.
- Shaḍaja—षड्ज : the first note of the eight Indian musical tunes viz *sá*. (सा).
- Shahajayána—सहजयान : name applied to a later school of Buddhism.
- Shakti—शक्ति : lit. Power or Energy. The name is applied by the Hindus to the Creative and Preservative powers of the Absolute.
- Shānti Āshrama—शान्ति आश्रम : Peace Retreat; home of peace.
- Shāntih—शान्ति : Peace.
- Shāstric—शास्त्रीक : in accordance with the scriptures.
- Shiva-lingam—शिवलिङ्गम् : phallic emblem of God Shiva.
- Smaradahana—स्मरदहन : lit. burning of cupid. A poetical work in Old-Javanese based on the Indian Sanskrit *Mahabharata*.
- Sraddhá—श्रद्धा : respectful faith.
- Shrāddha—श्राद्ध : oblations respectfully offered to the manes.
- Stupa—स्तूप : a solid domical structure containing some relic either of Gautama Buddha or of any other Buddhist saint.
- Sudra—शूद्र : the fourth caste in orthodox Hindu society.
- Susruta—सुश्रुत : is a Sanskrit book on medicine and surgery attributed to Susruta.
- Sutra—सूत्र : lit. a brief formula. It refers to a text consisting of a number of short sentences. Such texts may deal with grammar, philosophy or other subjects.
- Svarupa-lakṣmaṇa—स्वरूपलक्षण : essence.
- Tamas—तमः : the third and lowest of the three *guṇas*; ignorance.
- Tantra—तन्त्र : scriptural texts which specialize on the methods of worshipping various gods and goddesses, particularly Shiva and Shakti.
- Tāntrika—तान्त्रिक : pertaining to, or follower of the Tāntras.
- Tapasyá—तपस्या : spiritual austerities.
- Tarpaṇa—तर्पण : libations of water offered to the manes.
- Tatasthalakṣaṇa—तटस्थलक्षण : accidental.
- Tathāgata—तथागत : lit. 'one who has come from there'. It is one of the names by which Gautama Buddha is known. It is a word which conveys the sense of 'Messiah'.
- Tat-tvam-asi—तत्त्वमसि : thou art He; the self is *Brahman*.
- Teja—तेज : spirit.
- Tevijja sutta—तेभिज्जसूत : a Pali Buddhist text.
- Tirtha—तीर्थ : a place of pilgrimage.
- Tol—टोल : indigenous institution for teaching Sanskrit, generally maintained by a Brahman scholar at his own expense and in his own residence where the students are supplied with free board and lodging.
- Udbodhana—उद्बोधन : awakening; the name of the Bengali organ of Ramkrishna Mission founded in January, 1899.

Upanishad—उपनिषद् : a philosophical text treated as a part of the Vedas. They are more than a hundred in number and form the foundation of the *Vedānta* of the Hindus.

Vairāgya—वैराग्य : dispassion; non-attachment to materialistic enjoyments of life.

Vaisheshika—वैशेषिक : a branch of Hindu philosophy attributed to Kanāda (कणाद)

Vānaprastha—वानप्रस्थ : the third stage of the life of an orthodox Hindu during which he is to live a retired life, away from his home in a forest (vana).

Vaishnava—वैष्णव : worshipper of Vishnu.

Vajrayāna—वज्रयान : name applied to a mystic school of Buddhism of later origin.

Vāri—वारि : water.

Veda—वेद : The sacred revealed scriptures of the Hindus. The Vedas are four in number and are called *Śruti* ('revealed')—revealed by God to the Rishis (sages), their reputed authors.

Vedāṅga—वेदाङ्ग : lit. a part or number or limb of the Veda. They are not revealed texts and are therefore less authoritative than the Vedas. They deal with six different subjects.

Vedānta—वेदान्त :—lit. 'end of the Vedas'; final goal of the Vedas. The term is applied to the philosophy as

taught in the Upanishads, which are parts of the Vedas.

Vedānta-Sūtra—वेदान्त सूत्र : a Sanskrit treatise on *Vedānta* attributed to Vyāsa.

Vidyā—विद्या : Knowledge.

—aparā vidyā—अपरा विद्या : lower knowledge.

—parā vidyā—परा विद्या : higher knowledge.

Vihāra—विहार : means a Buddhist monastery or chapel.

Viksepa—विक्षेप :

Vijnani—विज्ञानी : the perfectly wise saint while the jnāni (ज्ञानी) is the just-wise man.

Vijnānamaya—विज्ञानमय : full of intellect.

Virajā homa—विरजा होम : *homa* means a sacrifice in the course of which articles are offered to the fire to be burnt. *Viraja homa* is a particular form of sacrifice to be performed by a person before he is allowed to enter into the monastic life, according to Hindu practices.

Vīrya—वीर्य : strength, valour.

Visistadwaita—विशिष्टाद्वैत : qualified non-dualism. A school of Philosophy founded by Ramanuja.

Vrihat—बृहत् : the superlatively great.

Vritti—वृत्ति : modification.

Yatra—यात्रा : A popular type of dramatic performance without any stage or scene.

Yoga—योग : lit. 'yoke', union, practice, way of worship cp. *Karma-Yoga*, *Bhakti-Yoga*, *Jnana-Yoga* and *Raja-Yoga*. Sometimes, as in page 45, the word is used in the sense of *Raja-Yoga*.

Yogic—योगिक : related to, or resulting from, *yoga* or spiritual austerities.

Yugacharya—युगाचार्य : the preceptor of an age.

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